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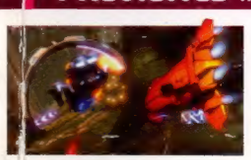

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The next-generation PlayStation magazine

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All the latest news, features and info!

Editor's Letter

It's happening, it's actually happening. Ignore the doomsayers and the 360 fanboys, the forum 'insiders' and blokes down the pub, the PlayStation 3 *is* being released in March in the UK. It may be right at the end of March, but it's March nonetheless. So was the wait really that bad and will it be worth it?

Well, what have we missed out on, really, that our Japanese and American counterparts have had since the end of last year? A few decent games, the internet on your TV and some high-def DVD action that, of course, is only applicable if you've bought yourself a HDTV.

We'll get all that and more next month with an improved launch line-up of games (even to the extent that UK *MotorStorm* will feature multiplayer online modes), a better online gaming service and loads more extras in terms of improved system software, and gaming and movie downloads.

See, PlayStation 3 is really about 2007. That's when the second wave of games will hit and, in theory, this is when things really get next-gen. You can find out exactly how good a year for gaming 2007 will be by reading our feature. It's starting on page 62, right now.

So while I'm still a little down that I didn't have a PS3 over Christmas, I've seen and played the best of PS3 US and Japanese style, and I can honestly say that you've not missed out on too much. Just make sure you bag a PlayStation 3 as soon as you can – 2007 is going to be one helluva year.

Enjoy the issue.

Your team on next3

Bringing you the best advice from the experts

Keith Hennessey

Keith said goodbye to a trusty servant this month: his white Vaxhall Cavalier 1.8i. It was the end of an era for the boy – it was his first ever car, and a real link to his teenage years. We suggested that he put it up for an issue of Classic Car magazine but he said it was time to move on, time to look to the future. And the replacement for the Cav? A white Vauxhall Cavalier 1.8i. Here's to the future, Keith.

Thomas Leclerc

See where it says "Bringing you the best advice from the experts," up above these pics? Well, Tom wants to be known as a 'sexpert'. See, Tom considers himself as something of a ladies' man. His clothes give it away: here is a man not afraid to wear a silky veil and a purple, crushed velvet suit. No, Tom not 'sexpert' but 'pervert'.

Craig Gilmore

After six months of living here in the South of England, Craig has been back home (the North) telling incredible tales of brown bread, phenomenal house prices and full employment. So taken by his stories were his family that they've all decided to move down with him. Craig's mum is now our reviews ed, his dad looks after the news and his whippet makes the tea.

next3

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OF JAGGED, RAZOR SHARP TEETH AND
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YOU ARE VICIOUS REMORSELESS
OCEAN FEARS YOU PERFECT PREDATOR

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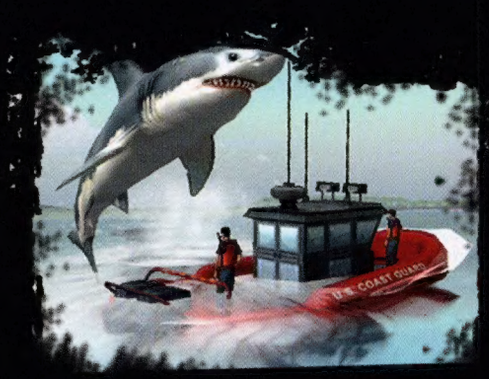

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Test your knowledge of these legendary SEGA Mega Drive titles.

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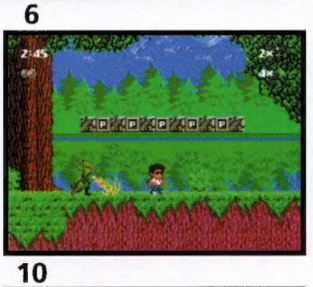
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IF YOU WANT TO HAVE YOUR SAY ABOUT ANYTHING PS3 RELATED, ANYTHING NEXT3 RELATED, ANYTHING GAMING RELATED THEN WE NEED YOU TO GET WRITING...

A Load of Jack

I have to admit, as much as the internet seems intent on vilifying the guy, Jack Thompson does – sometimes – raise especially interesting points on what violent videogames can do to people. Take the incident where the chap beat his 17-month old daughter to death after she yanked his 360 off the shelf as he played *GRAW*.

Ian Alexander, email

STAR LETTER

■ **We're inclined to agree – but only to a certain level. While we believe some games are capable of throwing mentally unstable people over the edge, Thompson seems to attribute that to all gamers. Especially the young. But he puts too much faith in the 'experts' he constantly refers to. That said, he's just a man worried about potentially harmful things to minors. Which is commendable.**

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- ☑ Talk directly to the Next3 team
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Resistance: Gears Of Man

Hello Next3 and thanks for the good mag. I love it and take each issue into school and let my friends read it at lunch break or sometimes in class. My question is which is better: *Gears Of War* or *Resistance*? I've played *Gears* and it's good but not great, while *Resistance* looks like the new *Halo*.

Sam Gardner, Lancashire

■ The games are very different – aesthetically and gameplay-wise. You will get to see next month when the console's finally released and can then make your own mind up. But, to answer your question, this writer preferred the one with the chainsaw.

No 3motion

I love the site, it's easy on the eyes and the blogs look like they could be excellent. But why did you choose a website instead of continuing with the DVD? I for one used to love the DVD, while a site just feels more standard, really.

Kelly, email

■ The internet is the magazine industry's main competitor and while we used to put a significant amount of effort into our DVDs, by the time they actually hit shelves, a lot of the content was fairly old. With the website we get to combat the net with up-to-the-minute news and exclusives, as well as throw our own original material on it. Stay tuned!

Ever-Net

I noticed that the containers of the PS3 boxes have an Ethernet cable included. Does this mean that Sony is actually trying to get a proper online service going? From what I have seen so far it suggests that all the PS3 can do is go on different webpages along with the quote "It is not finished yet". Cheers Next3.

Alan Tuckwood, Next3 Forum

■ The answer is yes: Sony has created a proper online service that you can play multiplayer videogames on, as well as download demos, film trailers and more, and you will finally get to explore its intricacies when the console launches in the UK in just over a month. We can almost here the gasps of anticipation around the country.

INFORM: GO TO WWW.NEXT3.CO.UK, SIGN UP AND GET TALKING WITH LIKE-MINDED PEOPLE ABOUT YOUR FAVOURITE HOBBY TODAY!

PLAYSTATION next 3 Headline News

More new games means PlayStation 3 sells faster than PS2

THREE TIMES' A CHARM

NOW the holiday festivities are well and truly over it seems Europeans have nothing left to do but sit, tear slowly trickling down cheek, in front of our computer screens and hear talk of how much the majority of North American are enjoying their PS3s, Blu-ray movies and myriad of download goodies. We say "the majority of America", because if recent reports are to be believed, the demand for PlayStation 3s is beginning to wane. Consoles are listed on various internet auction houses for little more than retail price and photos of stockpiled PS3 in US retailers are emerging daily, Sony must be worried right? Not a chance.

Speaking at the 2007 Consumer Electronics Show, Sony Computer America senior VP of marketing Peter Dille announced that the company had shipped over 1 million PS3s into North America during the six weeks following its launch. Stat fans will note that it breaks the record previously set by the PlayStation 2 and Sony attributes it all to an unwavering consumer demand. "The fact that we were able to reach the one-million mark faster than our top-selling platform, PS2, further validates the strength of the PlayStation brand and our belief that consumers are ready to experience true high-definition gaming." Commented SCEA boss Jack Tretton. So in response to those questioning whether people will still want the PS3 when supply finally catches up with demand, it seems the answer is a resounding 'yes'. Sony has even gone so far as to set a new PS3 sales target of 6 million units worldwide by the end of March.

This figure obviously takes into account the launch sales of several new regions in March, which not only includes Europe

"Sony has made assurances that the PS3 will have a very big game catalogue in a very small amount of time"

but Russia, the Middle East and Australia. So what will drive these massive sales? The simple answer is games and plenty of them; according to Tretton, early 2007 "will be about software and delivering innovative new experiences and award-winning franchises to consumers", this will be achieved through more traditional retail channels and the PlayStation's new online service. However, in an industry of incessant smack talking, chat is cheap and proof is needed to back up those claims. Thankfully, all we need is a quick glance at the release schedule to find the evicence we require, not happy to sit back and release the same list of games we saw at the Japanese and US launch, Sony and various publishers have made every effort to ensure the amount of games released alongside the PS3 in Europe is almost double that of the launches in the first two territories.

The fabled and much anticipated 'second wave' of games doesn't usually come until six-to-nine months after launch, but Sony has made assurances that the PS3 will have a very big game catalogue in a very small amount of time. And perhaps it has to in order to cancel out the buzz surrounding the Wii at present and to silence Microsoft's 'the next-gen is now' campaign touting the fact that the 360 already has over a hundred high-definition games – even if very few are genuine 'must haves'. Admittedly, the launch games were a little lacklustre in both Japan and the US, and updated versions of games like *Ridge Racer* and *Call Of Duty* weren't going to win Sony any awards in terms of originality or creativity; but by affording the European launch a few extra months' grace, the situation is decidedly different.

Sony is serious about the PS3's second coming, and over the past few months the publishing superpowers have confirmed that their key titles will indeed be ready for launch on this side of the pond. Sega, for example, has confirmed that both *Virtua Tennis 3* and the exclusive (if only for a few months) *Virtua Fighter 5* will be on shelves, French giant Ubisoft has at least five titles readied including *Oblivion*, *GRAW 2*, *Blazing Angles*, *Splinter Cell Double Agent* and *Rainbow Six Vegas*. While all of these games are or will be available on other consoles, there has been a strong suggestion that some, if not all, will feature new content exclusive to the PS3. Talking of exclusives, it would be a crime to forget the new downloadable content that will be waiting for European PS3 adopters on day one, *Gran Turismo HD*, *Tekken 5 Resurrection*, and *FlOw*, all available at a criminally low price point. With every new day Sony's online service is proving that it can compete with the already-established Xbox Live, and with such an influx of new games and gamers in March we hope it can continue.

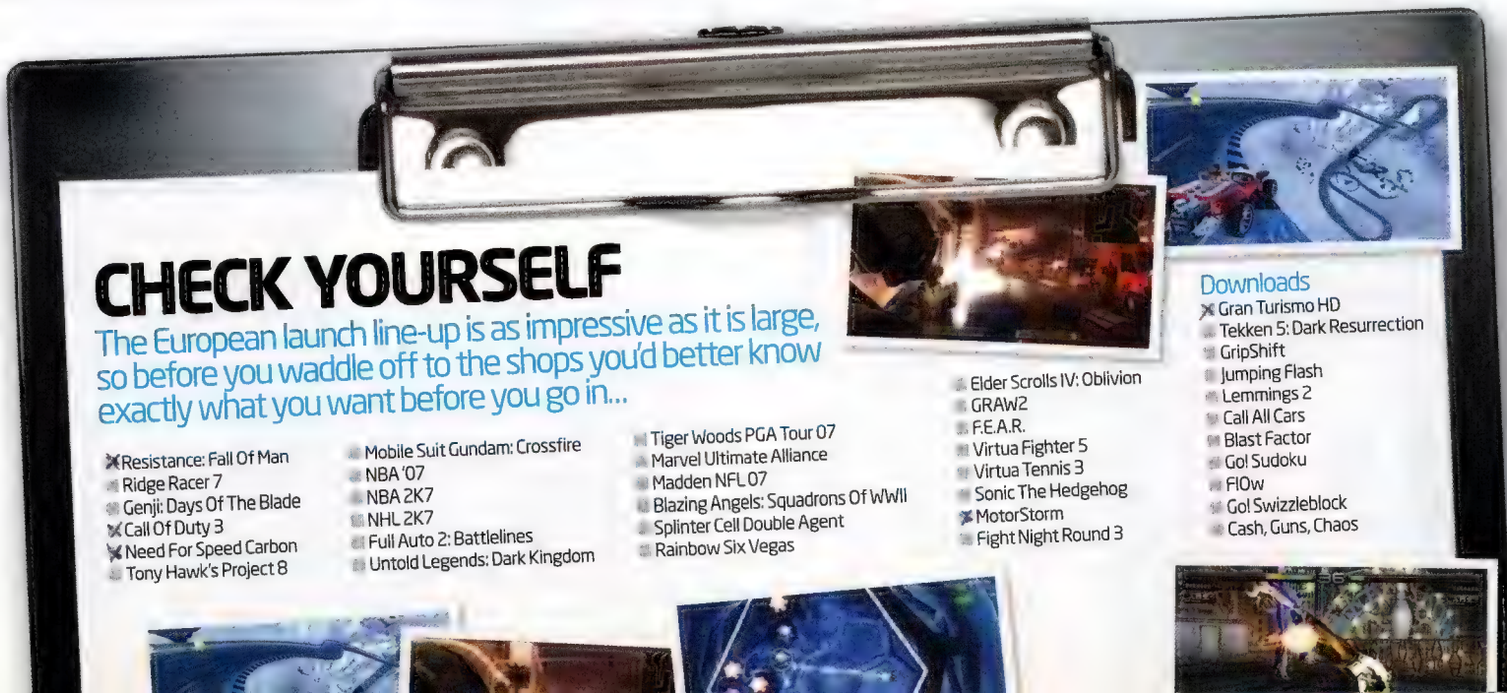
Two of the biggest crosses Sony's machine has had to bear is its supposed lack of exclusives and the dubious motion-sensing functionality of the Sixaxis but a game arriving on day one that should help to ease the pressure is *MotorStorm* – a game already being cited as the best racing game of the year. Never one to shy away from a party, EA also has a presence in the new launch line-up with its newly polished *Fight Night*. The EA game that looks most likely to steal *MotorStorm*'s thunder is of course *Burnout 5*, and despite not being ready for launch it does come as comfort to hear that when it does, the PS3 will be ahead as the lead development platform.

So despite the numerous obstacles threatening to hold Sony and the PS3 back: the delay, competitor's success and supply shortages – it seems what will save the machine is games, lots of them. Not standing static and waiting to build up a head of steam like its competitors, the PS3 is hitting the European market hard with a plethora of big-name games, oh and did we mention a free online service, fully backwardly compatible, Blu-ray and true high definition from day one. The next generation is now? The next generation is in March.

SHOCK WINS

SCEA honoured with Emmy

Sony Computer Entertainment America's engineers have been honoured with an award from the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, walking away with the award for Peripheral Development and Technological Impact of Video Game Controllers. The Emmy was awarded for its work on the DualShock 2 - the PlayStation 2's controller. The award should look very nice in Sony's trophy cabinet sat next to its CES Best of Innovations Award, Sound and Vision's Editor's choice award and the Digital Entertainment Group's Award For Digital Innovation.



CHECK YOURSELF

The European launch line-up is as impressive as it is large, so before you waddle off to the shops you'd better know exactly what you want before you go in...

- Resistance: Fall Of Man
- Ridge Racer 7
- Genji: Days Of The Blade
- Call Of Duty 3
- Need For Speed Carbon
- Tony Hawk's Project 8
- Mobile Suit Gundam: Crossfire
- NBA '07
- NBA 2K7
- NHL 2K7
- Full Auto 2: Battlelines
- Untold Legends: Dark Kingdom
- Tiger Woods PGA Tour 07
- Marvel Ultimate Alliance
- Madden NFL 07
- Blazing Angels: Squadrons Of WWII
- Splinter Cell Double Agent
- Rainbow Six Vegas
- Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion
- GRAW2
- F.E.A.R.
- Virtua Fighter 5
- Virtua Tennis 3
- Sonic The Hedgehog
- MotorStorm
- Fight Night Round 3

Downloads

- Gran Turismo HD
- Tekken 5: Dark Resurrection
- GripShift
- Jumping Flash
- Lemmings 2
- Call All Cars
- Blast Factor
- Go! Sudoku
- FlOw
- Go! Swizzleblock
- Cash, Guns, Chaos

newsflashes

ALL CHANGE AT THE TOP

Now that the PS3 is rolling off production lines and slowly making its way into people's homes around the world, Sony has decided to reward the team by handing out promotions left, right, and centre. SCEA boss Kaz Hirai is moving to Tokyo to take on the role of Sony Computer Entertainment president, with Jack Tretton replacing him, and Ken Kutaragi set to become SCE chairman. CEO of SCE Europe David Reeves will also take on the role as deputy president of SCEI. Sony said in a statement that former president Kutaragi won't be taking a back seat but "will continue to oversee the entire SCE group and fully exercise his power to reinforce and further accelerate the development of the PlayStation business."

FILMS DIRECT TO PSP

With the UMD format in its final death throws, it's not surprising to hear that Sony is in talks with Amazon.com, MovieLink and CinemaNow to offer PSP users movies for digital download within the coming months. We presume that the PS3 will become a pivotal part of this process, by being downloaded to a PS3 and then transferred on to a PSP memory stick. The first studio said to be supporting the download system is Sony's own Sony Pictures Home Entertainment but other big name companies could well follow suit.

MEXICO IS GO

If you think that Europeans are getting a raw deal in terms of PlayStation 3 pricing, it could be worse - we could be living in Mexico where Sony is planning to charge a hefty 10,495 pesos, or £508 for the 20GB PS3. That's almost a hundred pounds more that what we will be paying for the fully loaded 60GB model. When you consider that the average UK citizen makes as much as seven times more as their Mexican counterparts, the price does seem a little steep to us. Surely each nation deserves to pay a similar price for the same product?

PS3 poles top for Criterion

BURNOUT LEADING ON PS3

WITH every developer and their digital dog complaining about PS3's developing difficulties, it's reassuring to know that Sony still has a great deal of third-party loyalty from some of the biggest teams in the business. Flying the Sony flag recently was Alex Ward of Criterion Games – the team behind the awesome *Burnout* series – who confirmed that it was opting for the PS3 as its lead platform and wants to make *Burnout 5* look like a 'year two PlayStation 3 game in year one'. "We're kind of specialists on the Sony system. Because it was always that way on *Burnout*" asserted Ward when speaking to cable news channel MSNBC.

The ever-enthusiastic Ward was also keen to offer more details on the highly anticipated next-gen racer. Comparing it to the recent remake of *Superman*, he explained that the filmmakers spent a great deal of time working on the flying because "if the flying wasn't right, the movie wouldn't make any sense. If you didn't believe Superman was real, then you wouldn't believe the story." But if you're wondering what the man of steel has to do with Criterion's hurtling wheels of steel, Ward pointed out that, like the *Superman* team, they have to make *Burnout*'s famous car crashing look totally believable. "If you don't believe the crash is real, then it's not going to frighten you... the first crash you see on PlayStation 3 has got to go way beyond everything you've ever seen, beyond anything we've ever done." While Ward promises 'some cool stuff' for the Xbox 360, it's clear to us that the PS3 is the team's primary focus and wants to give it the most believable game we've seen yet.

JAPAN SUPPORTS SONY

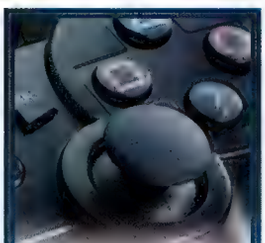
PS3 outsells Xbox 360 in one month

IT'S certainly no secret that Japanese gamers like Microsoft consoles about as much as a flick to the ball bag; however, what does come as a surprise is just how quickly the PlayStation 3 has outsold Microsoft's next-gen machine. Despite the launch shortage and production problems, it took just one month for PS3 sales to surpass those notched up by the Xbox 360, which has sold fewer than 180,000 units in the past 12 months.

On numerous occasions Microsoft has publicly expressed its desire to reverse its fortunes in the East and not to repeat the mistakes it made with the original Xbox, but it seems no amount of marketing and special bonus bundles will convince Japanese gamers to buy a US-made machine. In Japan Microsoft has sold less than 5 per cent of what it has managed to shift in the US, so whatever Sony is doing it must be working as the PS3 outsold the 360 by over 10,000 units before the end of 2006. These impressive sales figures might have a little something to do with the attractive pricing of the 20GB PS3 in the land of the rising sun; however, while Sony celebrate a small victory it shouldn't get too complacent as Nintendo's Wii has sold double the amount of both 360 and PS3. Perhaps we'll have a better idea of how the race is shaping up when fresh supplies of the PS3 hit the shelves in Japan.

EVOLUTION STUDIOS TALKING PS4

Makers of MotorStorm preparing for the next 'next gen'



Though Martin Kenwright has started talking about the PS4, he might want to talk with industry analyst Yuta Sakurai who believes that the recent reshuffle at Sony HQ could mark the start of a shift from hardware to software and when speaking to the *Financial Times* declared "I cannot imagine a PS4." Strong words indeed, but Sakurai may have a point; if the PS3 fails to live up to its predecessor will Sony really be willing (or financially able) to take a gamble with the PS4? And with the inevitable death of physical media, the world of cost-effective downloadable games may be too good an opportunity to pass up.

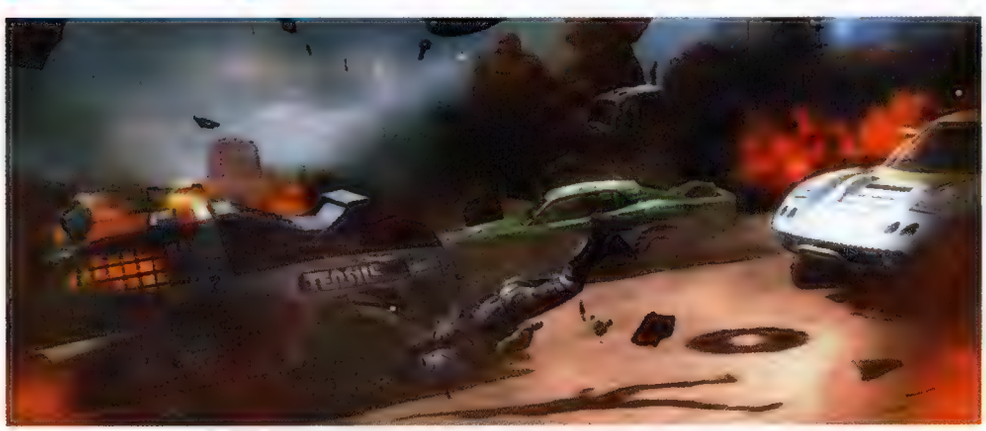
AFTERTHOUGHT

WHILE most of us are still biting our lips in anticipation of the PS3's arrival and the dawn of the true 'next generation' of gaming, some impatient folks out there are already looking forward to the PlayStation 4. One such individual is Martin Kenwright, head of Evolution Studios (developer of the impressive *MotorStorm*), who has recently admitted he is already dreaming up new projects for the fourth iteration of PlayStation, "I know people are looking at the PlayStation 3 now and I'm not being glib, but we are actually looking at PS4. I'm thinking: where will be in five years? How will we get there? What will the marketplace be like, the games, and who will be buying them?"

Although some might find this kind of forward-thinking a tad extreme, we're happy that developers are already thinking of ways to innovate and move the gaming industry forwards. A few years on and Kenwright predicts the world of videogames will have changed beyond all recognition and that if you want to make a difference and bring something new to the table then you have to invest an appropriate amount of time in your games, and not just churn out sequels.

"What we have learnt in the past is you can inclemently improve something by one per cent, and it takes two years and millions of pounds, and all you get is more of the same. You polarise your market. You are offering more of the same instead of something new, memorable and exciting."

Judging by what we have played so far of *MotorStorm*, Evolution is looking to push the envelope in terms of next-generation games and if Kenwright and his team have the same attitude toward the PlayStation 3 as they do the PS4, then the future is looking very bright indeed.



SELLING THE CELL

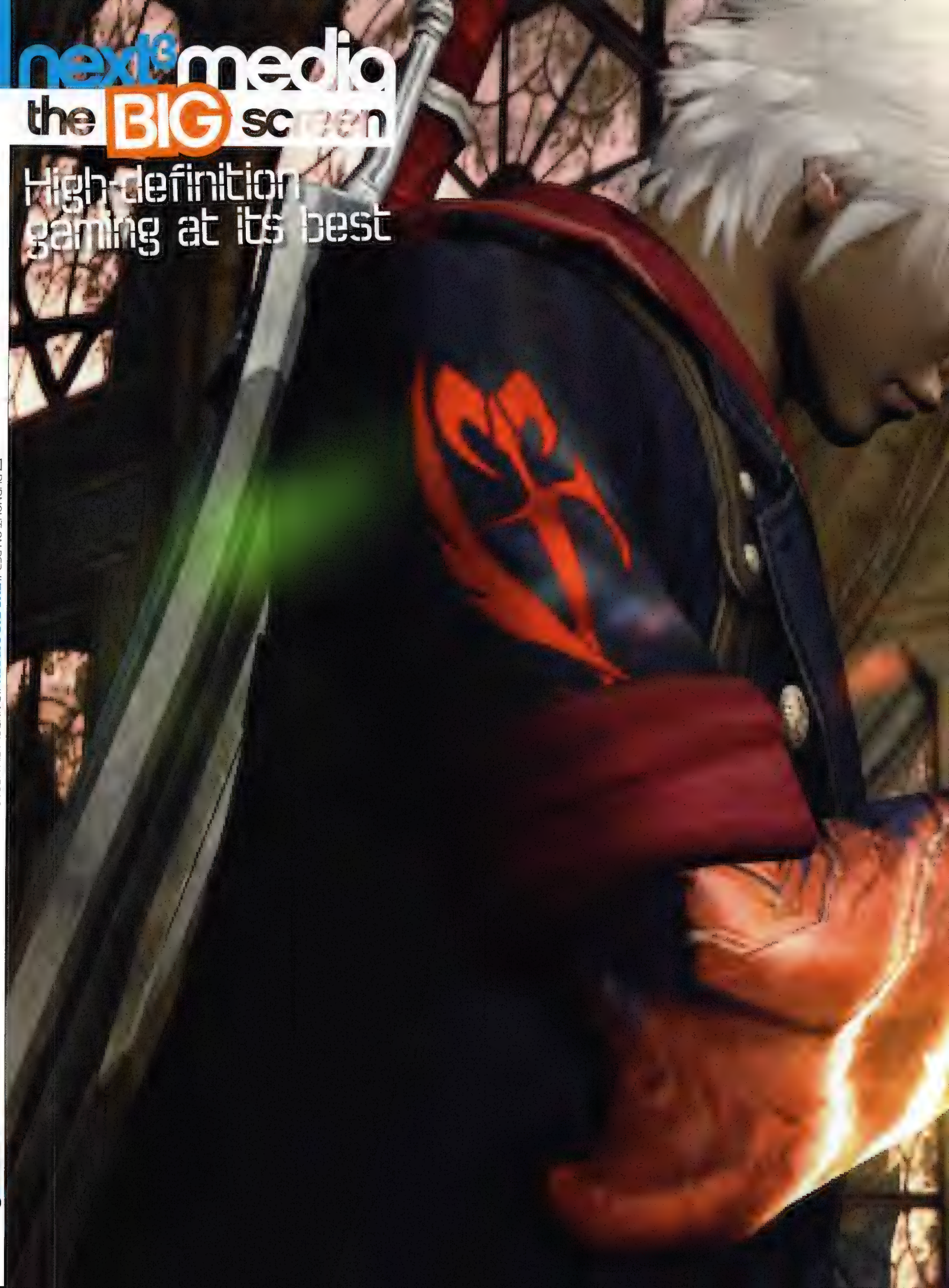
More appliances powered by the Cell

WHEN the first details of the PS3's über CPU were revealed, father of PlayStation Ken Kutaragi spoke of a time when all your household appliances could be powered by the Cell and would be able to 'talk' to each other and live in perfect harmony. It all sounded a little too much like a freaky *Terminator*-style scenario to us so we choose to ignore it; however, it seems that Sony refuses to let the idea of a Cell-controlled world die as this month it announced the future introduction of various cell-powered products.

Not limited to just electronic devices, Sony hopes to install the Cell chip in any product, which will 'find a meaningful enhancement with the processor.' But before convincing the world, Kutaragi has to make appliance manufacturers aware of how the Cell can improve their products which, even according to him, will be a tough challenge. Speaking to Japan's Impress Watch website, Kutaragi said "People making those everyday-life electronic devices are still not thinking their product will one day turn into computers. I believe this is some kind of pride that the electronic makers hold against the computer world." Reports that he also added 'I now know why you cry" are as yet unconfirmed.

the BIG screen

High-definition gaming at its best



▽ BURNOUT ON PS3 // **THE BIG SCREEN** // RAINBOW SIX VEGAS △

FROM NERO TO HERO

DEVIL MAY CRY 4

OUT: TBA 2007

ABOUT// Four years later and Capcom must surely still be feeling the sting. Despite creating two unquestionably excellent book endings to its previous-generation *Devil May Cry* trilogy, everyone still remembers the second game. More importantly, they remember how effluent it was. Thankfully, *Devil May Cry 4* can wipe away all memories of that trash when it debuts on PlayStation 3 later this year.

The most obvious tweak is in the story. Capcom is really trying to hit those dramatic heights only hinted at in the previous game. Yuji Shimomura is back again as cut scene director – meaning, if anything, we are likely to get even more insane scenes of Nero and Dante running up walls and down buildings, riding enemies around rooms with lots of whooping and hollering. Well, perhaps not for Dante... he's all serious this time.

The game is, bizarrely, set before the second title, and you can see from the aesthetics in the trailers and screenshots that it bridges the gap between each, thanks to some wonderfully dark, gothic architecture, and a more industrial style.

Devil May Cry director Hideaki Itsuno – who's at the helm for the fourth game and was also a key player in bringing the series back to its roots in the third instalment – has stated that we can expect lots more weapons, enemies, manoeuvres, locations, cut scenes, and music, than there is in any other *Devil May Cry* game. Which we think is enough to wipe away those tears still left by *Devil May Cry 2*.

This boss is the only one we've seen so far. He's enormous, but relatively easy to take down.

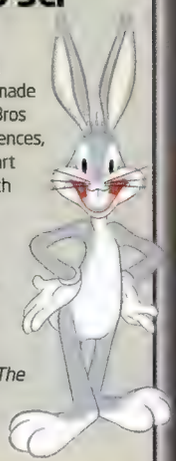
Nero's enemies are every bit as strange as Dante's. They die just as nicely, though.

newsflashes

GANG GO FOR PS3

Following the muggings, shootings and general rowdiness of the PS3 launch, one gang in Jacksonville took it a step further in their search for a PS3. According to a police report filed last month, a band of wily youths burrowed through the back wall of a GameStop store in an attempt to procure a PS3. An employee told police that, judging by all the boxes scattered over the shop floor, the thieves were after Sony's next-gen system. Unfortunately for them the boxes were empty and all they got were 13 Xbox 360s – sorry guys, better luck next time.

WARNER AND SCI JOIN FORCES



Games publisher SCi Entertainment has made a deal with Warner Bros that sees it pick up 11 new licences, including Looney Tunes, as part of a deal rumoured to be worth £44.5 million. While WB will acquire a ten per cent stake in the company, SCi will be able publish games featuring characters such as Bugs Bunny, and The Flintstones. It also has plans to develop a game based on the hit show *The OC*, so if you like your next-gen games looney and leggy then SCi is sure to deliver.

YOU'LL NEVER USE 100% OF PS3

Sounds like a challenge to us but in a recent interview with MTV, Sony's Phil Harrison said that due to the PlayStation 3's vast range of technical capabilities, no one will ever use 100 per cent of its features. Even Harrison himself admits that current Sony software is using "less than half" of the PS3's power, suggesting that in the months and years to come not only will the PS3 gain new technical attributes, but games will look twice as impressive as they do now.

PSP TO PS3

Downloadable PSP titles coming to PS3

WE have to admit that for a spell there we were worried about just how much of a fight Sony could put up against the mighty Xbox Live; but the more we hear about the PS Network, the better it gets. Not only is the PlayStation Store offering a variety of new and addictive games like *Blast Factor*, retro treats like *Lemmings*, and back catalogue PSone downloads – it now plans to offer cheap PSP games on your PS3 via its online service too.

Early January sees the release of high-speed racer *GripShift*, currently retailing for the paltry price of $9.99 – so us Europeans can expect to pay around five pounds for the pleasure. If you haven't played the original PSP release, *GriptShift* is a game that mixes fast racing with platforming and puzzles thrown into the mix. In porting the game to PS3, the game is being pulled up by its bootstraps to run in 720p and the folks from SOE say there has also been some gameplay improvements such as better handling, extra levels and a four-player Online Versus mode.

While on the topic of PSP IP, this month Sony's Phil Harrison confirmed that a range of *LocoRoco* sequels are currently in the works. "We're going to bring *LocoRoco* back in a couple of new ways with some new friends in the future." There's a chance that one of the 'new ways' *LocoRoco* will return is in a PS3 game, which makes perfect sense given the PS3's motion-sensing controls. Who could deny that the bouncy gelatinous blob would make a perfect downloadable game? Either way it appears that the bond between the entire PlayStation family from PSone to PSP is being made ever stronger by the emergence of the PS3.

Voice actress says too much

ASSASSIN SECRETS SPILLED

WHETHER it was a genuine mistake or just a well executed publicity stunt (you just can't trust these crafty game makers, you know) but in a recent interview, actress and voice talent for *Assassin's Creed*, Kristen Bell let slips a few spoilers about Ubisoft's upcoming stealth-slayer. That's right: spoilers, which we are about to reveal, so you have been warned. Bell, who has provided her voice and likeness for the game says that it's "based on the research that's sort of happening now, about the fact that your genes might be able to hold memory. It's about this science company trying to, *Matrix*-style, go into people's brains and find out an ancestor who used to be an assassin. And sort of locate who that person is."

For some time now there's been rumblings that as well as being a new kind of stealth adventure featuring intriguing social camouflage and acrobatic elements, *Assassin's Creed* will have a futuristic sci-fi edge and Bell's sentiments seem to confirm such theories. Ubisoft still refuses to confirm whether or not the entire game will have a medieval setting that we've seen already, or if we will get to go all 'Marty McFly' and do some time travelling.

6 THINGS WE LOVE

6 things we love about...

Rainbow Six Vegas

MAI TAI'S AND MAYHEM IN THE CITY OF SIN

1// Welcome to the Strip Those who have been to Vegas are likely get the most out of many of the recreated locations (albeit named differently). But the joy of seeing the gorgeous city of sin in game form won't be lost on everyone else.

2// We need cover! *Gears Of War* may have stolen its thunder from the masses, but *Vegas*' cover-orientated gameplay is much better in our opinion. It supports the game's tactical design more seamlessly.

3// You and AI You lead a three-man team in *Vegas*. The AI support is some of the best we've ever seen. Sure, there are slight idiosyncrasies here and there but for the most part it's stellar stuff.

4// Casino carnage! Fighting through the casinos, chips flying everywhere, fruit machines exploding and rotating cars being destroyed, is intense. *Vegas* easily has the most destructive combat in a *Rainbow Six* game.

5// Multiplayer madness Despite its short completion time, *Vegas* supports a very robust series of online and offline features, including co-op and various multiplayer game modes. Ensures you'll be playing for a long time.

6// Rainbow re-designed It's easy to see that the team at Ubisoft Montreal has gone all out to re-design the world of *Rainbow Six*. *Vegas* is still a tactical shooter, but the emphasis is now on bigger production values and intense thrills. More importantly: it works!

JUST ANNOUNCED

NEW GAMES

GUNDAM MUSOU

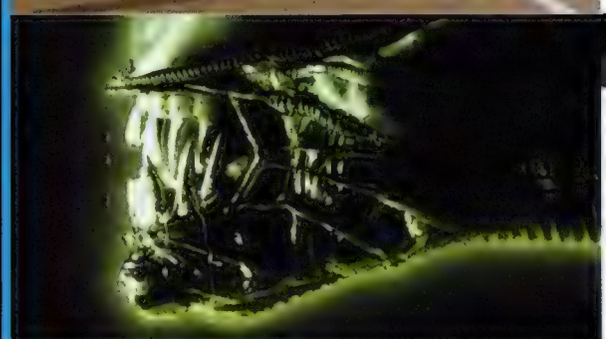
THE WHAT// If you've had the misfortune of playing *Crossfire* then news of a new *Gundam* game might not get your knuckles white with excitement but by putting the two things that Japanese gamers love most together in one game Namco Bandai figures it has a hit its hands. And those two elements are? Mechs and Musou moves of course, combining *Gundam*'s behemoth bots and characters with the button-bashing combos of *Dynasty Warriors* could well make for a winning formula in the East, but unfortunately it sounds about as appealing as a rectal examination to us.

THE WHO// As you might have predicted the project is a joint effort with both Koei and Namco Bandai involved; however, *Dynasty Warriors'* developer Omega Force is heading up development, which suggests the game will be more combat than cannons. Both publishers are specialists in their respective field, so that does at least give us confidence the game will delight the demographic its aimed at. The PlayStation 2 was swamped with both *Gundam* and *Dynasty Warriors* games most of which were rather uninspiring, we just hope together they can turn the tide on PS3.

MLB 07 THE SHOW

THE WHAT// *MLB* is a game that will have Americans dancing in the outfield. A solid stimulation, this goes beyond the ball and bat basics. Mess with Playermaker fielding, pitch grips and so on. It's packed full of modes, in addition to Career you can plumb for all-star games, Rivalry, Franchise and the fancy new Road To The Show mode.

THE WHO// Sony's *MLB* series started life on the PS2. The franchise now seems to be finding its feet and Sony obviously think enough of it to give it a shot at the next-gen big time. As well as previous *MLB* games the San Diego team is responsible for the recent *NBA 07* PSP release and the bizarrely titled *Neopets Petpet Adventure: The Wand or Wishing*.



ALIEN

THE WHAT// Sega has announced a deal to develop games based on the *Alien* movies. Two titles are in the works, an FPS and an RPG both set in the *Alien* universe, but not following the film plots. Both are set to arrive in 2009, and Sega's even in talks with the films' stars to lend their likenesses and larynxes to the project.

THE WHO// Sega is using top-draw talent for these projects with developer of *Neverwinter Nights II* and *KOTOR II*, Obsidian Entertainment confirmed for the RPG title and *Brothers In Arms* developer, Gearbox signed up to produce the FPS game. So there's plenty of experience to back up the big-name licence.

SPLINTER CELL DOUBLE AGENT

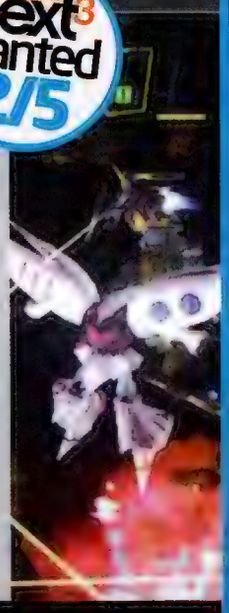
THE WHAT// Having been already available on other formats for an age now, Ubisoft has finally confirmed that *Splinter Cell Double Agent* will be released on the PS3 and with sexy new exclusive content – probably a new set of goggles then. Expect plenty of moral dilemmas, agonising decisions and the trademark stealthy antics.

THE WHO// Ubisoft Shanghai is developing or should we say has developed this one and it's now just a matter of porting to PS3. While there's no denying the boys from China have done a good job, we were just hoping for a little more variety but, who knows, maybe the new content will spice things up.

Keeping you bang up-to-date with all the latest game announcements on PlayStation 3

THE GOOD// Besides the usual *Dynasty Warriors* ability to slash your way through hordes of enemies at once, it has been revealed that the Dash function has been added to the game to make it feel a little more like a Mech title. Another new feature is the bizarrely titled 'Official Mode' that allows players to assume the role of Ray Amuro and various other popular characters from the *Gundam* series and embark on story-based missions giving you several perspectives on the events that unfold.

THE BAD// *Mobile Suit Gundam*'s first appearance on the PlayStation 3 wasn't the most convincing debut we've ever witnessed, which makes us more than a little nervous about what's to come. *Dynasty Warriors* has a long and colourful history on the last-generation of consoles but has yet to prove itself on next-gen formats, but if the Xbox 360 version of *DW5 Empires* is any indication, prepare for a whole world of boredom.



next3 wanted 2/5

THE GOOD// There's so much going on that you could lose yourself for an entire season, but Sony assured us that it doesn't have to be so involving, it can just be a simple game of slinging and swinging. There's also an 'always online' feature showing the latest sports headlines and other baseball-related gubbings.

THE BAD// Though there's a huge market for this sort of game across the pond but we're not really sure how much of an impact this will make. If, as touted, it manages to be both exciting and exhaustive it might win over a few sceptics.

next3 wanted 2/5

THE GOOD// An intriguing publisher/developer relationship working on one of the biggest sci-fi movie franchises ever is an enough to get even the most cynical hacks excited. Although *Alien* games have been a tad hit and miss over the years, perhaps taking them out of the restrictive film plots is just what the franchise needs.

THE BAD// Despite the awesome subject material for some reason many developers struggle to do the *Alien* franchise justice. We think it's fair to say there has been more bad *Alien* games than good but hopefully with this double hit of quality Sega can readdress the balance.

next3 wanted 5/5

THE GOOD// Easily the best story in the series – the myriad of choices you have to make actually makes you care about your actions and what the repercussions will be. The polished online game and new locations help the franchise to unlock even more of its hidden potential.

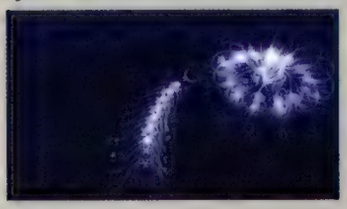
THE BAD// Despite being engaging, the main story is far too short and while *Double Agent* shows signs of delivering a fresh experience, in essence it still follows the same formula as its predecessors. The plot has a few holes, but when you're sneaking around killing baddies, does it matter?

next3 wanted 4/5

newsflashes

FLOW IS GO

Sony's so impressed by the creative skills of USC School of Cinematic Arts (developer of *flOw*) that it has offered the rookie studio a new three-game deal. Sony is giving the team known as thatgamecompany space and time on its premises in Santa Monica in the hope it can get back into the flow and deliver more innovative and addictive titles for its download service. Clearly pleased with the deal Dean Elizabeth M Daley said "This is a watershed moment in the history of the school and opens the door for our students to showcase their creative talent in an incredibly dynamic market."



PS3 DEVELOPERS HOLD BACK

Speaking in a recent interview with Games Industry, Game Developer Conference organiser Jamil Moledina said that many studios are holding back on PS3 development because of continuing difficulties with the Cell processor. "A lot of the developers I know are waiting out on the first round and focusing on handhelds; they're creating DS and PSP titles because that's a much simpler migration from the current-gen." We can't blame developers for playing it safe but Sony still has a great deal of third-party loyalty and now that the PS3 is in homes and more is known out its workings we'll soon see a games deluge. Even Moledina believes Sony new system will be a success despite what he calls a 'PS2-like launch.'

CAUGHT IN THE ACT

It's a struggle trying to promote your product, so it's nice when you get support from fan sites. One such site is alliwantforzmasisapsp.com, supposedly set up by two fans rapping about how much they love PSP. But visitors to the site became suspicious when they saw the site was registered to Zipatoni, whose client list includes Sony. Complaints were made and SCE admitted it had created the site, apologised and said it would now use the site for "nothing but the facts on the PSP." Busted.

the hot list

THE TEN BEST HAPPENINGS THIS MONTH

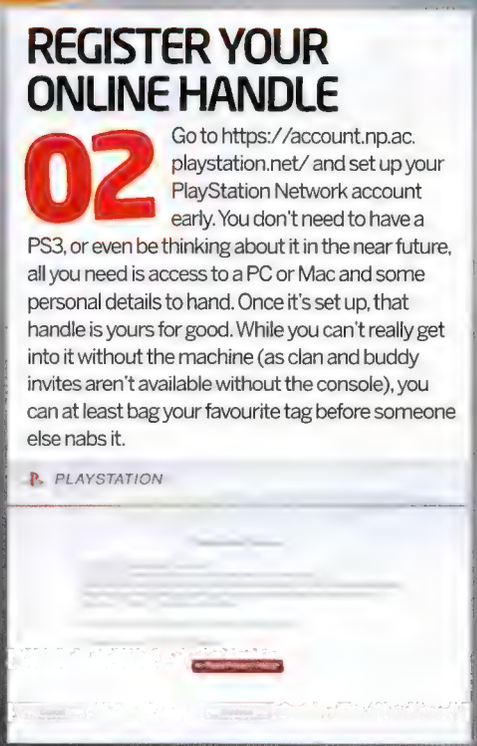
TEN OF THE HAPPIEST GOINGS-ON IN THE WORLD OF PS3

01 PS3 INVADES. IN MARCH. DEFINITELY!

The current rumours about additional delays to the PS3 are "categorically not true" according to Sony. Rather unusually commenting on internet speculation, SCEE's President and CEO stated that "We're still on schedule to launch PS3 in March throughout the PAL territories and all speculation otherwise is without foundation." This is positive news as Sony never comments on such rumours, and therefore must be pretty confident about a successful European launch.

02 REGISTER YOUR ONLINE HANDLE

Go to https://account.np.ac.playstation.net/ and set up your PlayStation Network account early. You don't need to have a PS3, or even be thinking about it in the near future, all you need is access to a PC or Mac and some personal details to hand. Once it's set up, that handle is yours for good. While you can't really get into it without the machine (as clan and buddy invites aren't available without the console), you can at least bag your favourite tag before someone else nabs it.



03 EUROPEAN DOWNLOADS ARE DIRT...

.. cheap that is. Yes, the thought that us Europeans would be charged any more than our US or Japanese counterparts seemed to repulse a Sony spokesperson recently, leading him to say there would be no defense for any increase in price. This is great news for us, as the downloads featured already on the Network are pretty good value. Given that, with a little fudging, anyone can download from the three regions' stores, there's little to entice Sony to ramp up the prices anyway. Here's to a free market.

04 BRAND SPANKING NEW

Clearly thinking outside the box with their new media showroom-cum-lifestyle area, Sony's brand space (as the marketing savvy call it) is up and running in London, serving as a place to meet, greet and show off with the upcoming PS3. This not only indicates, given the timing, that a March release is very much on the cards, but gives Sony a place to showcase its wares on a regular basis. Check out more news on what's going on at threespeech.com.

05 SONY TO MAKE MORE IN EUROPE

Forgive the tenuous extrapolation here, but the knowledge that Sony will be taking less of a loss on each console sold in Europe gives us hope. Hope that in its relentless chase of the Euro, it'll be more inclined to put a greater number of units on the shelves. Like we said, it's fairly tenuous, but it's the best piece of info we've had about the launch for some time.

06 FREE GAMES!

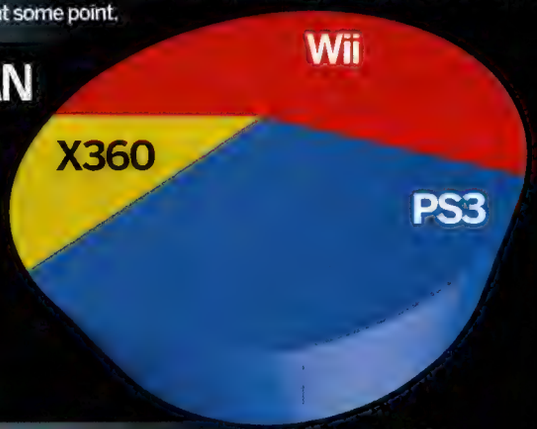
Stuff? For free? From Sony? Having just downloaded half of it, we're happy to report that the PlayStation Store is up and running with the kind of energy we never expected. Not only is it already loaded with triple-A titles, and other downloadable content, but in amongst it all is a free game. That game is *Gran Turismo HD*. Sure, it's there to entice you to buy more goodies via the PS Store, but being free, shows that Sony is committed to the online shop.

07 PS3 TAKES POLE WITH CRITERION

Star developer Criterion has been waxing lyrical about the benefits of coding on the PS3, particularly concerning its latest reworking of the *Burnout* series, saying that the first time you see a PS3 crash "you'll be blown away". Given Criterion's reliability in delivering a top-notch experience over the years, we're inclined to believe it, and the knowledge that it prefers developing on the PS3 is encouraging for fans of *Burnout* and *Black*, which will no doubt be making an appearance on the PS3 at some point.

08 PS3 WINS IN JAPAN

Well, it's been out for just a couple of months and the PS3 has outdone the Xbox 360 in Japan. With Microsoft's console having sold around 180,000 units in the course of its year already on the shelves, the PS3 has surpassed that within a couple of weeks of release. Sure, the Japanese have never liked the Xbox brand, so it's not exactly representative of the worldwide market, but still, encouraging stuff, eh? It's interesting to note that both the Wii and DS Lite outsold the Sony and Microsoft consoles by over two-to-one.



09 PSP DOWNLOADS ARE HERE

The three PlayStation Store regions each have their own range of downloadable PSone titles for transfer to the PSP, increasing the functionality of the handheld significantly. With titles like *Tekken 2*, *LocoRoco* special levels, and *Crash Bandicoot*, everyone can get hold of their favourites – and as ten new games have been promised per month, there should be plenty of variety come March.

10 ALIEN FPS GAME

Gearbox, the developer responsible for titles such *Brothers In Arms* and *Halo* has announced it is to take on one of the best licences ever – *Alien*. Having grossed more than $550 million since the first film hit screens in 1979, *Alien* is sure to be one of the most anticipated titles of the coming years. Previous attempts to capture the magic have failed, but with Gearbox's pedigree, we imagine this will be something of a higher order altogether.

RUMOUR CONTROL

Fact or fiction... you decide

1 KONAMI CANCELS *CODED ARMS: ASSAULT* Originally set for release in the second quarter of 2007, there's now a chance we might never get to wage war on virtual 'bugs' in Konami's first-person shooter *Coded Arms: Assault*. Dropped from *Famitsu*'s release list, *Coded Arms* could have been canned.

RATING 3/5

Konami is keeping tight lipped about the status of game but all has been suspiciously quiet on the *Coded Arms* front recently, so there is a possibility the *Assault* has been called off.

2 A NEW PS3 MODEL Despite there being two different PS3 units available already, word has it that a third iteration is in the works. The new model is said to be a 'media-centric' variant and will be packaged as a video entertainment system that also plays games. Focusing more on the Blu-ray functionality it will feature two HDMI ports and an anti-vibration mechanism.

RATING 2/5

Sony will certainly give Blu-ray a big push and a new type of PS3 could help, but those likely to invest in a Blu-ray player will already be aware of what the current PS3 can do and so changing the features and design would be pretty pointless.

3 CLOVER STUDIOS RETURNS Only a month ago we reported that the Capcom development house behind games like *Okami* and *Viewtiful Joe*, Clover Studios was to close its doors forever; however, now it seems the clever folks employed there are set to start work on a new title for Producer Atsushi Inaba in his own studio in Osaka.

RATING 3/5

There's yet to be any official word on this one, but it goes without saying that we certainly hope it's true. Whether the new studio will keep its ties with Capcom is anyone's guess, although there are also reports that Inaba's former Clover partner (and *Resident Evil* maestro) Shinji Mikami has joined the new outfit.

4 EA ONLY TAPPING 20 PER CENT OF PS3 POTENTIAL In a recent interview it was reported as saying that, due to development difficulties, some of the games it has coming out have used just 20 per cent of the PlayStation 3's potential.

RATING 4/5

While this might sound a worrying rumour at first, we hope it's true because when we look at how good games like *Fight Night* and *Need For Speed* look already we got to wonder what's in store when it unlocks more potential later down the line.

PS3 SHORTAGE BENEFITING SONY

No PS3 means more PS2

THE PS3 has been on general sale in both Japan and in the United States for some time now but not everyone who wants a console can find one. Due to a chronic shortage of systems and various production issues, there just isn't enough PS3s to meet demand. While this is obviously a problem for Sony, after all no PS3 sales means no cash in the pot and, perhaps worst, people putting money into the pockets of the competition by snapping up a 360 or Wii. Nevertheless, as a result of the shortage a few interesting statistics have come to light and, according to recent reports from analyst groups, the biggest winner in this whole sorry situation is actually, Sony.

Instead of ploughing their hard-earned green into another console, PlayStation gamers are using the money they have saved for PS3 to buy PS2 software. Though this might seem like a win, win for Sony, some games publishers are losing out, particularly EA who has focused funds on PS3. That means companies like THQ and Activision that chose to stick with 360 and PS2 development are currently sitting pretty. So while the PS3 shortage might not be doing too much damage to Sony's bank balance, if it carries on for too long it could start to seriously damage its relationships with third-party publishers who are spending money on PS3 development with low returns. We just hope Sony is as good as its word and delivers fresh shipments to all territories very soon.

SEGA RALLY ROARS IN

First details and shots of Sega's next-gen racer

FOR months now the big blue has been teasing us with titbits on its racing studio's next-gen effort, but this month it give us a full eyes and ears-on with *Sega Rally*. Sega Racing Studio director, Guy Wilday spoke to Next3 about the challenges faced by his team who are trying to reinvent the franchise for a different type of videogame player. "We included the essence of the original version but also updated and enhanced the experience... While other Rally titles have focused on gritty realism we firmly believe that racing rally cars offroad should be an exciting experience and to this end have focused on making the game extremely playable and competitive."

This comes as music to our ears as what the *Sega Rally* series has always been about is fun and frenetic racing, not concerning itself with too much customisation or car collecting. Also, with the promise of new car handling and physics that's been tailored for 'maximum playability', this should be an arcade treat not to be missed. The crazy drifting and mud smattering is obviously best enjoyed with a couple of fellow shred-heads and Wilday did confirm that *Sega Rally* will be supporting multiplayer modes for Sony's PS Network, which should make interesting competition for the likes of *Colin McRae: DIRT* and Sony's own *MotorStorm*.

Speaking of competitors, *Sega Rally* isn't forsaking realism in favour of fun because, like other PS3 offroaders, *SR* boasts a range of fully licensed vehicles and an impressive deformation system that sees the tracks ripped up and constantly changing shape. Wilday explains "No two racing laps are ever the same and the racing environment is always evolving and changing. The player will be able to take advantage of this by driving in the groves created by other cars to provide more traction and grip."

After such a long sabbatical, *Sega Rally* has a lot to prove, but the initial signs are good. The genre has experienced a resurgence of late and with a team consisting of former Rare, Rockstar and Critierion staffers, it has every chance of success on the PS3. But what, above all else, does Wilday and Sega want to achieve from its next-gen racer? "Our aim here is simple. We are looking for *Sega Rally* to provide the best offroad experience available on a next-gen console. We are working to provide a game which will have the same impact on the Rally genre as the original game did and we have all the ingredients and experience with which to do it."

No David Sneddon allowed

GAME ACADEMY

WITH the violence, terror and, at times, graphic scenes that are part and parcel of today's videogames industry, there's never a shortage of people willing to climb on their soapbox and condemn each and every videogame, whether it's considered damaging or not. MP Boris Johnson is the latest in a long line of headline-grabbing wannabes to slam the games industry for destroying literacy levels in primary schools and turning children into 'blinking lizards' that are motionless, absorbed with only the twitching of their hands showing they are still conscious. But thankfully, not all those who dwell within the walls of parliament are game-hating kill-joysticks, in fact some are campaigning for further investment in game development.

Creative Industries Minister, Shaun Woodward has suggested that the games industry should help the government sponsor an academy to teach gamers the skills they need to become game developers. "You might have kids who traditionally have quite a difficult time coping with traditional academic subjects but happen to be the most amazing gamers... you have to look very creatively at the kind of educational background you want." Asserted the minister. Suggesting that videogames as a medium are just as important as film or television, Woodward went on to say "You see television and film schools but we don't have a videogames school. Why not? Because the sector is so new. And yet we're third largest manufacturer in the world." If the videogame industry is willing to invest, Woodward is confident that game academy's can work and might even help silence the likes of Boris and his buddies.

newsflashes

PS3 SUPPORTS PS2 HDD

One of the many complaints levied at the PS3s backward compatibility solution at launch was that it did not support the use of the PS2 hard drive required for games like *Final Fantasy XI*. Listening to cries of *Fantasy* fans everywhere, Sony has now released an update that now allows PS2 games to store cache data on the PS3 hard disc. The update basically creates a virtual space for a PS2 HDD so you can save the data just as you would on your PS2. Weighing in at 7MB, you're not asked to sacrifice too much memory and the update is a one-time only affair so it's relatively hassle free too.

OKAMI
GOD. HERO. HUNTER. SAVIOUR.
OFFICIAL PLAYSTATION 2 MAGAZINE - 10/10
"AN ABSOLUTE MASTERPIECE"
PSM2 - 92% GOLD AWARD
"OKAMI IS THE MOST BEAUTIFUL GAME ON PS2; A JOY TO PLAY"
EDGE - 9/10
"OKAMI IS AN EPIC... EXHILARATING... UNIQUE"
PLAY - 93% 'GAME OF THE MONTH' AND 'CLASSIC' AWARD
"ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL AND CAPTIVATING GAMES EVER MADE... CONSISTENTLY DELIGHTFUL"
GAMESMASTER 95% - GOLD AWARD
"A BLINDING JEWEL IN PS2'S CROWN... SPECTACULAR"
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next web

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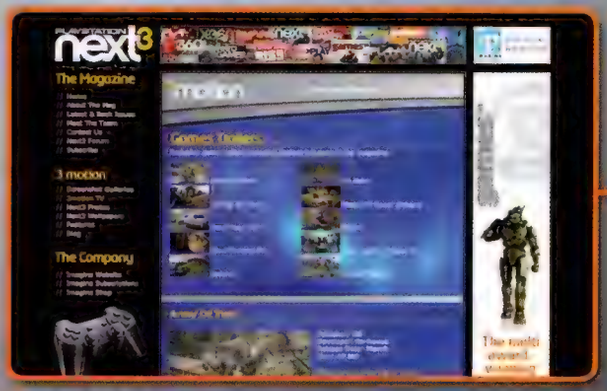
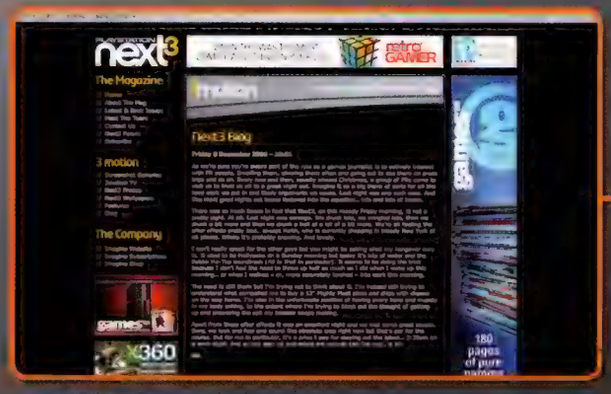
FEATURES >> Loads of gaming extras, including, developer [illegible], behind-the-scenes footage, and gaming events.



TRAILERS >> Download or view up-to-the minute PlayStation 3 [illegible] and in-game footage, so you can see what the game looks like when you actually play it.



BLOG >> The inside scoop on what's been happening in the Next3 offices written by us for you.

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Q&A

ASI LANG

Guys and their guns, eh? We speak to president of Windward Mark, Asi Lang, about all things shooty

INFORM
Name: ASI LANG
Company: WINDWARD MARK
Role: PRESIDENT

Tell us three words that best describe your game.

Sweeping, Political, Filmic

Consoles change but war stays the same. What measures have you put in place to ensure the war genre evolves and gamers get something different from last-gen titles?

Story and the WarStudio™. After *Alliance*, I think gamers will come to expect a new level of fidelity in weapons simulation and a much richer story experience than they're used to. It's not just the tech that's next-gen with *Alliance*, it's also our whole approach.

What new multiplayer aspects have you included?

The biggest focus, by far, will be the WarStudio™, which is our massive database of 20th Century small-arms. We will allow players to mix and match military technology from 100 years of history, so they will be able to pit anything against anything – heavy calibre rifles against high-capacity handguns – you name it.

How different is your AI to similar shooters, what behaviour might you expect from your enemies and allies?

Unscripted, emergent behaviour is the strength of it, so you won't be seeing the same tired performance from the enemies each time you play. And we're planning some really fun stuff with the people under your command, which I can't get into just yet!!

What makes your game truly 'next gen'?

Ironically enough, I think the thing that makes *Alliance* most unique as a next-gen title is nothing technological. You'll actually be causing a lot of history's most famous events, and fight alongside some of its most notable figures, but for reasons entirely different than what you might expect. I think *Alliance* will be the first truly filmic video game ever made, especially in the FPS genre, and I think it's that amazing level of involvement which will really make *Alliance* next-gen.

What part of the game makes you smile/cry?

The music. I love pairing the right music to the right scene.

What was your main focus when starting development and how much has the game changed from your original vision?

Two of us, myself and our lead designer, said to one another "wouldn't it be great if a game finally did guns right. I mean really give guys like us a vast sandbox to try out every gun imaginable, match things up however we want, and finally get the feel of an FPS right?" And that's how it started. As far as changing from the original vision, it's funny, because that concept in and of itself remained pretty solid throughout.

Customisation is an ever-increasing element in next-generation titles, what can we expect from your game?

Haha, again, it's all about the WarStudio™. Never before have players had the ability to create such a vast array of matchups of different weapons, team sizes, camouflage and equipment. You want to use the loadouts of Vietnam-era SEALs, but with PPSHs and only Eastern-bloc pistols? Done. How about Japanese WWII-era rifles with Northern European submachineguns? *Alliance* and the WarStudio™ will truly give gamers an unlimited palette of options for waging war against each other.

How will your game change the world?

Change it? In *Alliance*, you're the one making it.

Check out www.alliancethegame.com for more information

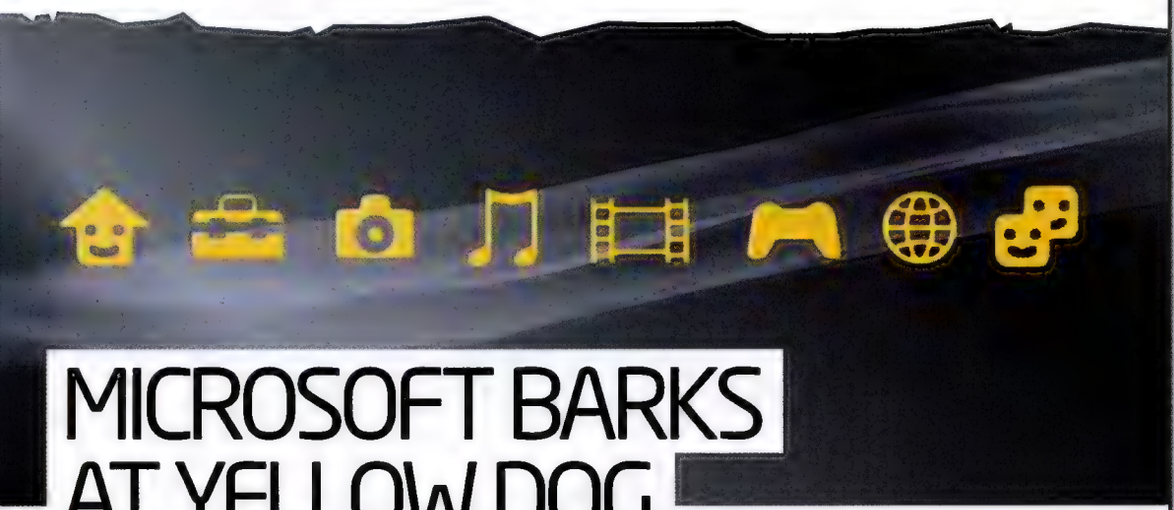
"Unscripted behaviour is the strength of it, so you won't be seeing the same tired performance from enemies each time you play"

FACTOR 5 WORKING ON DOWNLOADABLE TITLES

Lair developer working on small surprises

STILL hard at work on PS3's first (and probably only) dragon adventure *Lair*, developer Factor 5 is already talking about what its plans are for later this year. Speaking in a recent interview, Factor 5 co-founder and president Julian Eggebrecht revealed that his team is developing two PS3 titles for e-distribution. Though unwilling to elaborate on the nature of the titles, he didn't hold back on what he thought about the Sony's online network. "I think the EDI [E-Distribution Initiative] has huge potential, and personally as a director, I think it's one of these things that we in the creative community need a little bit."

Judging by Eggebrecht's comments, it seems that it is not only the gamers who enjoy these small digital delights, but developers too. They, despite taking on the big projects, can find it's possible to use the downloadable titles as an exciting outlet. Eggebrecht asserted, "People who work on these two and a half year, three year projects have a chance, even within an organisation like Factor 5, which usually works on these large games, to work on something small again... It's the biggest thing I'm looking forward to in 2007." Apart from release of *Lair*, we presume.



MICROSOFT BARKS AT YELLOW DOG

Microsoft claims PS3 Linux not competitive compared to XNA

WITH the recent launch of Microsoft's XNA Studio Express and Creators Club, we'd be disappointed if the Redmond-based company didn't have a sly swipe at the competition. First was Microsoft's director of marketing Dave Mitchell who, when quizzed about Sony's efforts to create its own space for user-created content via Linux, said "On the one hand I've got to commend them for moving up their platform there, but we really don't view what Sony and the PlayStation 3 and particularly the Linux solution are making available as a competitive offering or trying to do something in the same vein."

The mud slinging didn't stop there as Chris Satchell general manager of Microsoft's Game Development Group also hit out by questioning Sony's approach "I don't think Sony has the right focus. I'm not even sure, looking at how they execute they even think that it's important. Like providing people with tools so that they can be creative: they certainly don't do it in their professional space, so I don't really believe they're going to do it in other spaces." Meow, it's clear Satchell is referring to Sony tardiness in providing third-party developers the appropriate specs and tools to produce PS3 games, but all this talk means that something has got the Microsoft men rattled. Could it be perhaps that where as its Creators Club requires an annual subscription, Linux can be installed (with certain regulations, of course, such as restricted access to the RSX graphics chipset) for nothing, effectively providing PS3 homebrewers with a creative space that's absolutely free? Plus with Sony's Phil Harrison's constant reassertion that user-created content has a big part to play in Sony's Network plan, the PlayStation 3 could well become a big draw for bedroom-based developers everywhere.

newsflashes

U-U-U-U-ULTRAAA GAMER

Researchers from worldwide business intelligence specialists, JupiterResearch has identified a type of gamer known as the Ultra Gamer. Apparently 22 per cent of us fall into this category, which means we spend five hours or more per week playing games. The recent rise of these 'ultra gamers' has been attributed partly to the gamerpoints phenomenon. This is bound to rise significantly when the PS3 hits, and we all become ultra-super-giga-mega-gamers.

SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW

In one of the most innovative uses of the Sixaxis' tilt function, EA's upcoming *Army Of Two* is going to utilise it to place mortars. Using a probe to obtain a bird's eye view, the aiming reticule is placed and steadied by the tilt function. The other, more obvious, use is when taking shots with the sniper rifle. Where previously games have simulated a natural shake, the Sixaxis actually takes the minute movement of your hands and transfers that to the screen. Cool, huh?

WELCOME TO THE KING OF IRON FIST TOURNAMENT

Shadow motion pictures, an Atlanta-based film studio, are putting together a live action film short of Namco's mega beat-'em-up. While it doesn't really look to be the most proficient martial arts film, and follows the story of Brian Fury and Jin Kazama, fans will no doubt be interested to see how director R. L. Scott transfers the game to the big screen.

newsflashes

DANTE ANIME

With all the recent talk of Capcom's movie moves and shakes it will come as no surprise to learn that the action-adventurer *Devil May Cry* is set to get its own anime series. As well as videogames, Dante and co have already featured in their own Manga comic book and its gothic style seems perfectly suited to some Japanese animation action. No plot or release details have been announced, but we'll keep you posted. Turn to page 14 for the latest *Devil May Cry 4* screens.

X-TRA SPECIAL XMAS

Now we've dispensed with the mince pies and merriment of the holiday season, it's time for UK games retailers to celebrate as the final days of the Christmas period proved to be the biggest ever. Even without the PS3 on the shelves, sales were up nearly ten per cent on the same period last year. The week before was even better seeing a 30 per cent increase, naturally EA came up trumps with the likes of *FIFA* and *Need For Speed* notching up huge sales figures. With the games market reinvigorated, now's the perfect time for the PS3 to arrive and drive sales even further.

NEW GUNDAM GAME

If you've had the misfortune of playing *Crossfire* then news of a new *Gundam* game might not get your knuckles white with excitement, but if Japan's leading gaming magazine *Famitsu* is correct we'll be getting another new game before the year is out. Bandai Namco is set to resume publishing duties and that's about all we know for now, except the name of course – *Gundam Musou*. Is this set to be some sort of crazy *Dynasty Warriors* crossover, or just another rubbish mech mash up?

PS2 NEXT-GEN WINNER

PlayStation 2 to outsell new consoles

PS3 STILL 'MOST WANTED'

Sales still high

While the PS2 might well outsell its next-gen sibling this year, the demand for the PS3 – not just in Europe, but worldwide – is still high. With eBay prices falling fast, recent rumours have suggested that demand for PS3 is dying down; however, if the recent sale at Woot.com is anything to go by, which saw 80 PS3 units sold in under four minutes, it's clear the PS3 is going to be bigger than Jes... erm the PS2.

THERE'S been no end of virtual hair pulling, eye gauging and purple-nurples dished out between the various next-gen (or should that be now-gen?) console manufacturers; however, no one could have expected that the biggest selling machine of the new year may well be a veteran of the gaming world. According to a recent report, many analysts and industry insiders predict that the gamers' console of choice for 2007 will not be the PS3, Xbox 360 or Wii, but the trusty old PS2. "Despite all the hype surrounding the PS3, its predecessor is likely to outsell it for two more years... The PS2 probably has the capacity to sell more than any other gaming console," wrote *BusinessWeek*.

When you consider that consoles like the PS3 and Wii will no doubt suffer from supply shortages for the first half of the year and the Christmas rush has furnished many gamers with an Xbox 360, this prediction could well be on the money. With games like *Guitar Hero* and *Okami* keeping the PS2 scene alive, plus the inevitable cut-price bundles on offer when the PS3 arrives – why wouldn't the casual gamer opt to inhabit the third place?

FROM SILENT HILL TO HOLLYWOOD HILLS

Game makers see movies as a way forward

WITH a multitude of big-name videogames currently making their way from console to can, it now seems the follow-up to *Silent Hill* is also in the works. Speaking to French publication *DVDrama*, *Silent Hill* director Christophe Gans confirmed that a second film is 'well underway', and Roger Avary (*Pulp Fiction*) and Neil Gaiman (*Mirrormask*) will be helping out with the script. But since making those comments, Gans has posted on his blog that he may not be able to take on the project himself as he's putting the finishing touches to the big screen version of *Onimusha*.

Soon there will be more games on the cinema screen than our consoles, but why the sudden slew of videogame films? Well, Capcom may shed some light on the situation as it has recently stated that it's looking to option more of its IP to movie makers. *Resident Evil* was a huge success for Sony Pictures, weighing in as its second most-successful franchise. So with its ready-made titles just waiting to be captured on celluloid, we're sure studios will be falling over themselves to get a piece of the action. However, Capcom's VP of licensing Germaine Gioia has also expressed the desire to make use of its existing game engines to produce more movie-licensed titles. Speaking to the *Hollywood Reporter* she said, "I think it's becoming clear that the very successful publishers are delivering more and more of a balance to the marketplace. They need their own IP and good solid original development, but also licensed product that can reach across cultures."

So if Capcom makes the right deal with a lucky movie studio, we may see more game/film diversity challenging the likes of EA and Ubisoft in the West with licensed and original titles.

newsgrid

GOOD, BAD, EXPECTED, UNEXPECTED – LET'S PUT THE NEWS IN CONTEXT!

MAPPING OUT THE MONTH'S NEWS ON GRAPH PAPER. BECAUSE WE CAN

GOOD

BAD

UNEXPECTED

EXPECTED

A NUMBERS GAME

A report by analysts TNS Worldpanel Entertainment has revealed that the number of woman and older people playing videogames has skyrocketed. Over the past four years the amount of people aged 45 and over playing games has risen by over 40 per cent and the figure for women is up by 67 per cent. Expect sales of Stannah stairlifts and pink fluffy things to plummet in the near future.

FIVE STARS

French publisher Ubisoft already has five games ready and waiting for the PS3 launch; including, *GRAW2*, *Splinter Cell Double Agent*, *Rainbow Six Vegas*, *Blazing Angels* and *Oblivion*. While we're glad to be getting such a variety of games on day one, some originality wouldn't have gone a miss – let's hope they all contain new and exciting PS3 content.

TEKKEN 5 PUNCHES IN

Following in the footsteps of *Gran Turismo*, *Tekken 5: Dark Resurrection* appeared on the PlayStation Store this month ready for download. It boasts more characters, high-def visuals and costs about £25 less than the PSP game – sounds like a bobby dazzler to us.

VF-OFF

The loss of PS3 exclusives has been a hot topic in the gaming industry for some time now and this month Sony lost another doozy with the announcement that *Virtua Fighter 5* will also appear on the Xbox 360. It makes us sick to our stomachs to think 360 gamers will have their mucky hands all over the Precious – not that we're bitter, of course.

WAITING IS EVIL

Despite the hope we would be playing the fifth instalment of *Resident Evil* before the year is out, the game's producer Jun Takeuchi has gone on record as saying that the highly anticipated shooter is still at the storyboard stage of design and won't be with us until at least 2008, possibly even early 2009.

Versus!

Best substitute teacher

GENE SIMMONS

GAMES: Tony Hawk's Underground (PS2), Kiss Pinball (PSone)

	GENE SIMMONS		ROCKY BALBOA
Discipline	7	9	Discipline
	He had a go at teaching prissy public school kids and grubby little chavs from a council estate so he has the necessary classroom experience – but after a life of rock and roll debauchery, we're not sure he sets a good example		Debt collector for the mob turned heavyweight champion of the world anyone who has challenged his authority so far has ended up looking a little like elephant man. Kids, challenge him at your peril
Music Lesson	8	2	Music Lesson
	He certainly has the song writing and vocals licked, however, we're not sure how well all that crotch-thrusting and blood vomiting will go down with the headmaster		He might be the Italian Stallone in the ring but, as anyone who's heard him serenading Adrian can confirm, in the music hall he's more like a three-legged mule
Lesson Plan	6	6	Lesson Plan
	To run a multi-million pound merchandising empire you've got to be able to strategise and formulate business plans... no wait, you just have to be very, very greedy		If it's early in his career he'll be hungry for success and still living grubby apartment planning like he is. But get him later when he's cocksure and things could get sloppy
The Three Rs	7	4	The Three Rs
	If the letters refer to Rock, Roll and Randy then there's no denying that Simmons has this one well and truly won, but as for reading and writing, it's a bit of a gamble		Years of getting pounded in the head can't have done his brain cells that much good. His geeky girl Adrian has given him a basic education, so that's about all he can pass on
Field Trip	1	7	Field Trip
	Being known as the Demon it's off to the depths of hell for the kids where they can play in the rivers of molten acid and taunt all the souls damned for eternity – good luck getting permission slips signed for that one		It's off to the slaughterhouse with Mr Balboa as he teaches the kids where burgers come from. Afterwards it's a tutorial in hanging meat, before some physical education as they pound the carcass' silly invaluable stuff
OVERALL	29	28	OVERALL

ROCKY BALBOA

GAMES: Rocky Balboa (PSP), Rocky (PS2), Rocky Legends (PS2)

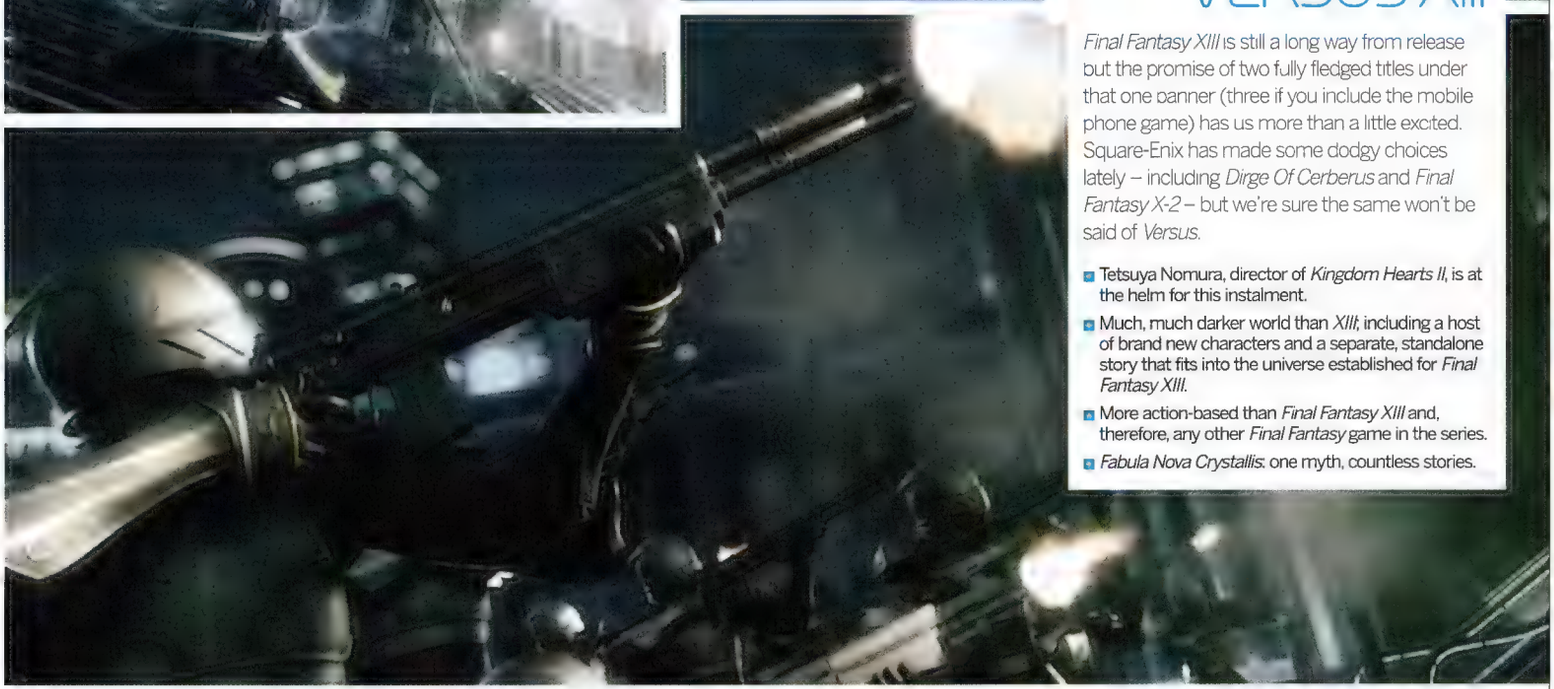
the next3Gen

ALL THE LATEST NEW SHOTS AND INFORMATION ON THE GAMES THAT REALLY MATTER

TUROK

Given how the last *Turok* has pretty much faded from the gaming public's mind, there's a chance people could mistake this reinvention of the franchise as some sort of *Prey* rip-off, what with its Native Indian lead character. If that's the price Propaganda Games pays to wash away thoughts of *Evolution* we're sure it'll welcome such thoughts.

- This next-gen *Turok* is a complete reinvention of the franchise and is led by a brand new developer, Propaganda Games.
- Features a whole new story and characters, with a mythology only loosely based on the previous games, as well as more ideas that have been taken straight from the comics.
- Work as part of a team, dispatched to a distant planet of the future to apprehend a war criminal.
- The bow returns! Specially placed arrows can turn dinosaurs on other enemies.



FINAL FANTASY VERSUS XIII

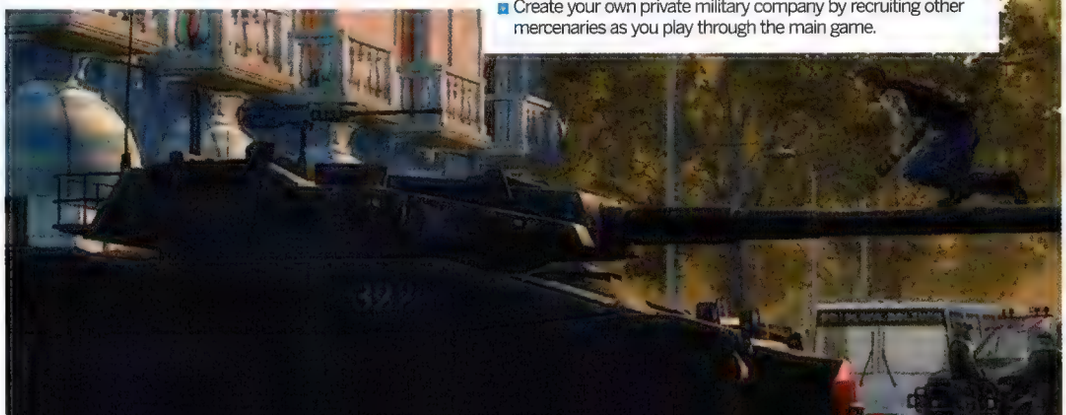
Final Fantasy XIII is still a long way from release but the promise of two fully fledged titles under that one banner (three if you include the mobile phone game) has us more than a little excited. Square-Enix has made some dodgy choices lately – including *Dirge Of Cerberus* and *Final Fantasy X-2* – but we're sure the same won't be said of *Versus*.

- Tetsuya Nomura, director of *Kingdom Hearts II*, is at the helm for this instalment.
- Much, much darker world than *XIII*, including a host of brand new characters and a separate, standalone story that fits into the universe established for *Final Fantasy XIII*.
- More action-based than *Final Fantasy XIII* and, therefore, any other *Final Fantasy* game in the series.
- *Fabula Nova Crystallis*: one myth, countless stories.

MERCENARIES 2: WORLD IN FLAMES

Mercenaries proved that not every game using a sandbox design post-*GTA* was trying to claim its crown, and instead pursued an avenue of sheer destructive beauty that its Rockstar relative couldn't even dream of. It's also certainly courted the kind of controversy that would make Rockstar proud – infuriating an entire country and inadvertently getting Bono involved.

- MOAB: Massive Ordnance Air Blast (or, more impressive, Mother Of All Bombs) features in *Mercs 2*. It's creates a blast so powerful that people have often mistaken it for a nuclear blast.
- Fog Off! Something that plagued the first game was its use of fog to hide the draw distance and this reduced the chance of the frame rate taking a hit. *Mercs 2* has zero fog.
- The entire single-player mode can be played co-operatively with friends, adding new depth to the world of *Mercenaries*.
- Create your own private military company by recruiting other mercenaries as you play through the main game.



Helping you plan your gaming future

next3 releases

Find out when all the big PlayStation 3 games are coming to a store

March

Armored Core 4	Sega
Bladestorm: The Hundred Years' War	Koei
Blazing Angels: SOWWII	Ubisoft
Brothers In Arms: Hell's Highway	Ubisoft
Call Of Duty 3	Activision
Coded Arms: Assault	Konami
The Darkness	2KGames
The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion	Ubisoft
Enchanted Arms	Ubisoft
Everybody's Golf	Sony
Fatal Inertia	Koei
F.E.A.R.	Vivendi
Full Auto 2: Battlelines	Sega
Formula One Champ. Edition	Sony
Half-Life 2: Episode Two	EA
Heavenly Sword	Sony
Hellboy	Konami
Genji: Days Of The Blade	Sony
Lair	Sony
Madden NFL 07	EA
Marvel: Ultimate Alliance	Activision
Gundam: Crossfire	Namco Bandai
Monster Madness	SouthPeak Interactive
MotorStorm	Sony
NBA 07	Sony
Need For Speed Carbon	EA
Ninja Gaiden: Sigma	Tecmo
Rainbow Six Vegas	Ubisoft
Rayman Raving Rabbids	Ubisoft
Resistance: Fall Of Man	Sony
Ridge Racer 7	Namco Bandai
Sega Golf Club	Sega
SingStar	Sony
Sonic The Hedgehog	Sega
Splinter Cell Double Agent	Ubisoft
Stranglehold	Midway
The Darkness	2K Games
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 07	EA
Tony Hawk's Project 8	Activision
Unreal Tournament 2007	Midway
Untold Legends: Dark Kingdom	Ubisoft
Virtua Fighter 5	Sega
Virtua Tennis 3	Sega
World Snooker Championship	Sega

April

Alone In The Dark	Atari
Colin McRae: DIRT	Codemasters
Elveon	10tacle Studios

May

Avalon	Climax

2 sense

Summing up games to the power of two

Golden Axe
Golden oldey

Stuntman 2
Danger powers

Indiana Jones
Ford thinking

Dark Sector
Mutant man

Far Cry 2
Cast away

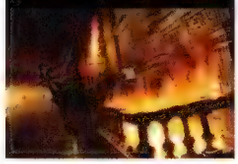
Tekken 6
Tough love

SKATE
Skate crime

Monster Hunter 3
Fossil fuelled

Madden NFL 07
Touching down

Alone In The Dark
Park life



Mercenaries 2: World In Flames	Pandemic
Tom Clancy's GRAW 2	Ubisoft

June

Afrika	Sony
Battlefield: Bad Company	EA
Def Jam: Icon	EA
Devil May Cry 4	Capcom
Fifth Phantom Saga	Sega
Grimsquad	TBC
Medal Of Honor Airborne	EA
Ni-Oh	Koei
Romance Of The Three Kingdoms	Koei
Spider-Man 3	Activision
The Eye Of Judgement	Sony
WarHawk	Sony
The Wheelman	Midway

July

Army Of Two	EA
Frontlines: Fuel Of War	THQ
Monster Madness	SouthPeak
Monster Kingdom: Unknown Realms	Sony
SKATE	EA
The Outsider	Frontier
TNA Wrestling	Midway
Untitled	Naughty Dog

August

Golden Axe	Sega
Haze	Ubisoft

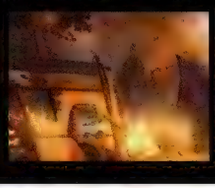
NB All release dates correct at time of going to press. Release dates subject to change without notice.

Wanted on PS3

Here's one we'd like to see on our side of the fence sooner rather than later

Overlord (PC)

This is a game that's steeped in humour and irony. The story sees a tyrannical overlord overthrown, then a power struggle commences to become the new lord. There's lots of moral decisions to make and you can order around a troop of mischievous gremlins. If that's not entertainment we don't know what is.



next3team

WHO'S WAITING FOR WHAT...

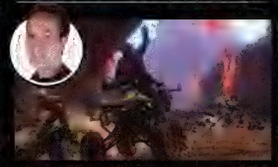
EDITOR IN CHIEF
NICK JONES

MOST WANTED
GTA IV
ASSASSIN'S CREED
HEAVENLY SWORD
METAL GEAR SOLID 4
PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 7

ART EDITOR
JAMES DAVIES

MOST WANTED
LA NOIRE
BATTLEFIELD
ARMY OF TWO
SKATE
ASSASSIN'S CREED

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
KEITH HENNESSEY



MOST WANTED
LA NOIRE
KILLZONE
BURNOUT 5
GTA IV
MOTORSTORM

Key game Liable to slip Could be dodgy

es near you

House Of The Dead 4	Sega
NBA Street Homecourt	EA
Parabellum	Acony
Sega Rally	Sega
Stuntman 2	THQ
Turok	Buena Vista Games
WarDevil: Enigma	Digi-Guys

September

Assassin's Creed	Ubisoft
Clive Barker's Jericho	Codemasters
Burnout 5	EA
The Club	Sega
Data Fly	TBC
Dirty Harry	The Collective
Eyedentify	Sony
Indiana Jones	LucasArts
Metro 2033: The Last Refuge	4A-Games
Project Offset	Offset Software
Resident Evil 5	Capcom
Rogue Warrior	Bethesda
Tekken 6	Namco Bandai
The Wall	Play Ten

October

Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare	Activision
FIFA 08	EA
Getaway	Sony
Grand Theft Auto IV	Rockstar
Fall Of Liberty	Codemasters
Monster Hunter 3	Capcom
Pro Evolution Soccer 7	Konami

November

Afterburner	Sega
Dynasty Warriors	Koei
Eight Days	Sony
Interstellar Marines	Zero Point Software
Metal Gear Solid 4	Konami
WWE Smackdown! Vs RAW 2008	THQ

December

Killzone	Sony

TBC 2008

Dark Sector	D3 Publisher
Dreamers	Dreamgazers
Far Cry 2	Ubisoft
Final Fantasy XIII	Square Enix
Final Fantasy Versus	Square Enix
Harker	The Collective
Heavy Rain	Quantic Dream
Kuriyama	Grasshopper
LA Noire	Rockstar
Lego Batman	Traveller's Tales
Makai Wars	Nippon Ichi
Prince Of Persia 4	Ubisoft
Rain	Artoon
Ratchet & Clank	Sony
Shin Megami Tensei 4	Atlus
LOTR The White Council	EA
White Knight Story	Level 5

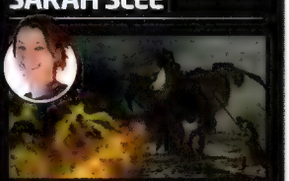
STAFF WRITER
TOM LECLERC

MOST wANTED
ARMY OF TWO
HEAVENLY SWORD
GTA IV
FIGHT NIGHT ROUND 3
DARK SECTOR

STAFF WRITER
CRAIG GILMORE

MOST WANTED
HEAVENLY SWORD
CLIVE BARKER'S JERICHO
THE DARKNESS
METAL GEAR SOLID 4
ASSASSIN'S CREED

SUB EDITOR
SARAH SLEE



MOST WANTED
EYEDENTIFY
RATCHET & CLANK
LAIR
BURNOUT 5
TONY HAWK'S PROJECT 8

next3 Essentials

Plan ahead for PS3's essential...

BEAT-'EM-UPS

1 Virtua Fighter 5
The best 3D fighting game on the market and a PS3 exclusive... Winner!

2 Tekken 6
Sure to give the competition a good iron fisting

3 Fight Night Round 3
EA fighting franchise is still the best boxer out there

4 Def Jam: Icon
The only fighting game that literally rocks the block

5 WWE Smackdown Vs RAW
Cancelled last year but luckily it has what it takes to make a triumphant comeback

YOUR TOP TEN

Join our forum and vote for your most-wanted PS3 games www.next3.co.uk/forum

METAL GEAR SOLID 4
GTA IV
TEKKEN 6
RESISTANCE: FALL OF MAN
ASSASSIN'S CREED
RESIDENT EVIL 5
FINAL FANTASY XIII
HEAVENLY SWORD
MOTORSTORM
DEVIL MAY CRY 4

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Everything you need to know broken into numerical factoids

1 Percentage of faulty PS3s reported and replaced

10 Percentage increase in turnover of Christmas games retail this year

125 Price in Hong Kong Dollars of *Tekken HD* (Approx £8.23)

300 Amount in Terabytes that we'll be able to store on a 3.5" disk in 2010 using heat-assisted magnetic recording

599 Cost of an unbundled PlayStation 3 at Bestbuy.com

2007 Years since Jesus' birth

9,911 Calls to Sony customer service in the first ten days after PS3's launch

35,000 Number of units sold in Christmas week by best-selling PS3 title in Japan: *Armored Core*

180,000 Number of Xboxes sold by in Japan to date

75,000,000 PS3's expected to be sold by 2010

200,000,000 Total consoles sold by Sony to date

PS3 BLU IS BEST

PS3 Blu-ray player kills competition

NO matter how much Sony denies it, it doesn't take a genius to work out that the PS3's built-in Blu-ray player has contributed greatly to the somewhat lofty price of the console; however, with the Xbox 360's HD-DVD add-on now priced at £130, the Blu-ray drive is starting to look like a bargain. This notion is further compounded by research from the likes of UltimateAVmag.com who, after an extensive review of the PS3's Blu-ray playback capabilities, concluded that it more than competes with pricier players from Samsung and even Sony itself. The review praises PS3's Blu-ray for its excellent image quality, lightening-fast loading and access speeds, as well as its superior audio capabilities.

Hardware specialists UltimateAV professed that "compared to Samsung's BD-P1000 and Sony's BDP-S1 as BD players, the PS3 is superior in absolute picture to the former, and more than holds its own with the latter. And it kills both in terms of start-up and disc access speed and overall ergonomic stability." Both of the players mentioned are considerably more expensive than the PS3, a fact the article also picks up on. "Aside from being the coolest-looking piece of gear ever, it's the only next-gen player so far that behaves like one in every respect... The PS3 is one of the best deals going." This helps to confirm what many of us already knew, which is that at £425 not only will the PS3 be the cheapest Blu-ray player on the market, but also the best.

SONY TO SHIFT 75 MILLION PS3S IN THREE YEARS

Research firm predicts big sales in short time

FOLLOWING hotly on the heels of author Anthony Perez's article entitled 'Hasty Conclusions: The Fate of the PS3 and Wii' that prophesises the PS3's eventual next-gen success, comes another prediction claiming that while the PS3 might not dominate like the PS2, it will triumph in the console war. The Dublin-based analyst firm Research and Markets have crunched numbers and probed deep into the games industry to produce a document called 'The Transforming Global VideoGames Market: The Emergence of Next-Generation Gaming" – rolls right off the tongue, doesn't it? Focusing on the battle for superiority between PS3, 360 and Wii, the company believes that Sony will sell the most and goes on to make a sales forecast that 75 million PS3s will be sold worldwide by 2010.

Other conclusions were that the Xbox 360 will be a close competitor and Nintendo continues to dominate the handheld market. Jeez, these guys are good, without their geekery we'd have never figured all this out by ourselves... Joking aside, these and all the other recent predictions depend on the PS3 reaching PAL territories in March, a launch that Sony Europe boss David Reeves says is still 'on schedule'. All of these industry examinations and positive PS3 prophecies are very encouraging, especially in light of the criticism the console received pre-launch. Nevertheless, as history has proved time and time again, nothing can be taken for granted, and if Sony is to be successful with the PS3 it will have to come up with the kind of quality IP, innovation and exclusives it managed with the PS2.

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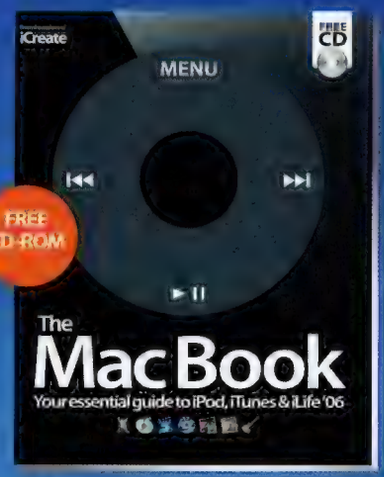

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IMAGINE PUBLISHING

Pushing the plunger with the weight of opinion

More importantly, a continuation of it
GENRE BLEND

TAKE one fast-paced and extremely destructive racing game; add a massive and open-city environment that is not entirely dissimilar to those featured in the recent *Need For Speed* games and, to top it off, sprinkle a bit of Guns and Roses' *Paradise City* all over. Pop it all in a next-gen blender and let it spin for ten seconds until thick and gooey. Pour the mixture into a large bowl, place it in the oven for fifteen minutes and wait for it to turn golden brown. Carefully remove the bowl from the oven. At this point you might want to cut away excess load times. Congratulations... you have just made *Burnout 5*. Tastes good, huh?

It should because, like many games on PS3, it shows a willingness from developer Criterion to introduce different genre traits into an established formula. More succinctly, Criterion is trying its hand at genre blending for the fifth game in its popular *Burnout* franchise – not least of which is the inclusion of the *GTA/Need For Speed Carbon* open-city environment. Which is remarkable when you remember that this is a developer who rejuvenated console racing games five years ago with the original *Burnout* – a game with a simple and, some might argue, rudimentary ethos that nevertheless gave us one of the most destructive and visceral experiences of the last generation.

This highlights an avenue many developers are exploring with the next-generation platform: genre blending. *WarHawk*, irrespective of how bloody dodgy those on-foot sections look in trailer footage, is still worthy of some praise for at least trying to mix things up a little. However, whether you actually want those on-foot sections in a predominantly air-based action game is entirely subjective. *Army Of Two*, EA's intriguing two-man co-op third-person shooter is another fine example: an action game that builds on the increasingly popular co-operative experience by crafting its entire design around having to work with another person. *Assassin's Creed* may be using a similar design to many third-person platform games, such as *Beyond Good & Evil*, but it differentiates itself with clear simulation undertones: ie, the crowds. Not to mention free running, which has now become its own industry.

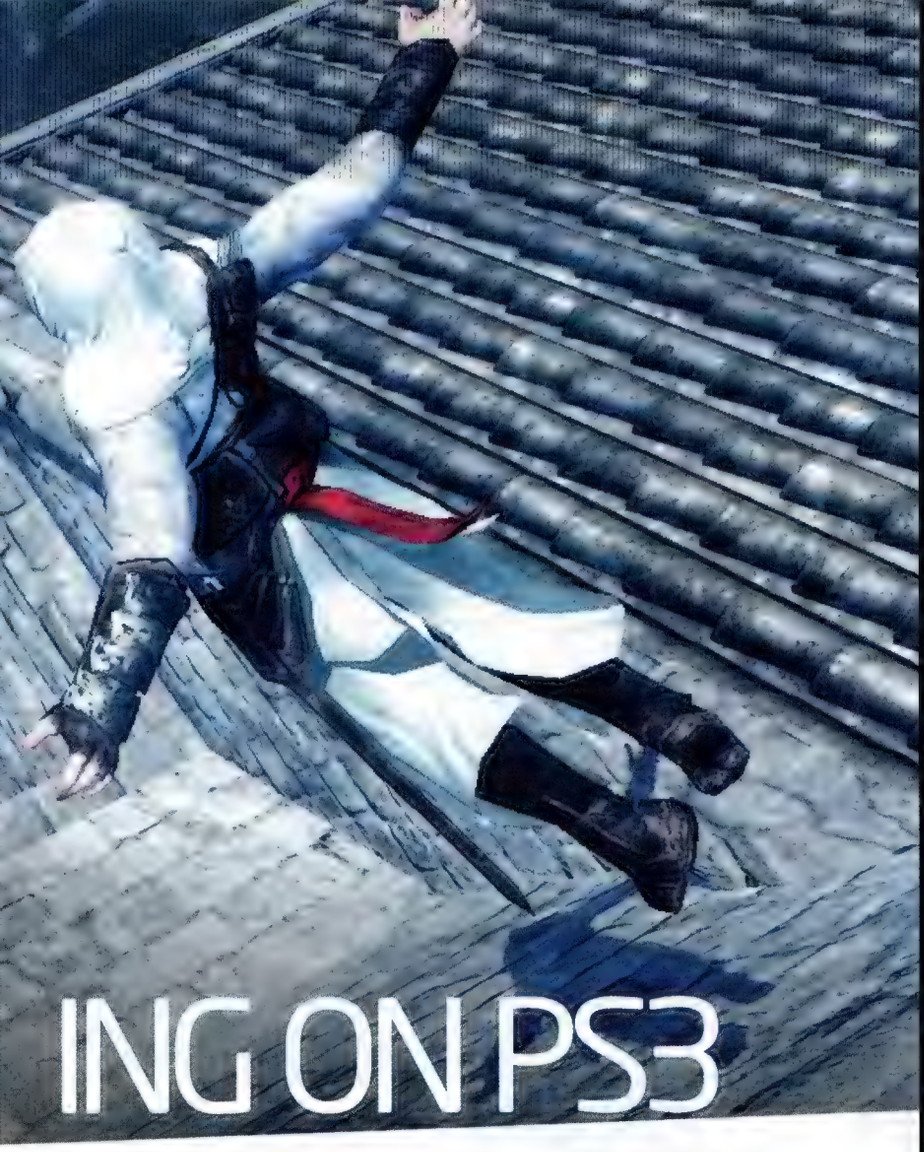
The idea of genre blending is something that's existed in games for years. We all know that. But never have we been more aware of it than now: when copious next-gen games hit shelves and inspire us to debate the merits of purely old-school games; those featuring some level of diversity or genre blending; or games that don't even do any of that, instead running with one pure design thought.

THE PURISTS
Good games that shun genre blending

BURNOUT 2 – *PS2, XBOX, GC* (2003)
Stripping the racing concept to its bare bones was a design choice that paid dividends for developer Criterion – especially in *Burnout 2*, where the franchise arguably peaked. All you had to concern yourself with was driving incredibly fast and avoiding traffic, in addition to trying hard not to be taken out by the opposition.

RIDGE RACER 7 – *PS3* (2006)
No, the classic Namco shooter that opens *Ridge Racer 7* doesn't count. *Ridge Racer 7* maintains everything this franchise has explored in all the previous entries – that is, not very much at all. However, its core design is still as entertaining as ever.

BLACK – *PS2, XBOX* (2006)
Yet another Criterion game, but this time it's of the first-person shooter variety. The developer stated that it wanted to do for the FPS genre the same thing *Burnout* did for racing games and thus stripped the concept back to its core values: pointing and shooting at things. And splodes. Lots of splodes.



ING ON PS3

Last year, *Fahrenheit* took an interactive movie template and inserted rhythm action and Quick Time Events (QTE) into the mould, thus creating an odd mix that was tough to pigeonhole. *Resident Evil 4* had its own spin on QTE too and lest we forget how *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas* injected RPG elements into the core gameplay – something not everyone appreciated, so we're certain Rockstar will amend in it *GTA IV*. We've witnessed genre blends for years, but they are more vital than now with the PS3 promising new levels of game design.

Diversity is key: the thing that keeps us constantly engaged or, at the very least, surprised throughout, and diversity can come from genre blending. Think of *Resident Evil 4* and how it kept you on your toes with the prospect of yet another QTE. Even games such as *EyeToy* and *SingStar* are now more relevant than they've ever been – the latter enabling players to upload their best karaoke videos online. These genre-blending prospects are exciting – perhaps nothing new... but exciting. Now eat your cake.

BAD BOYS

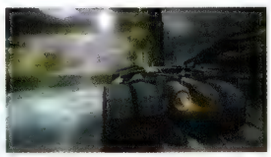
Games that try to blend genres and fail

CALL OF DUTY 3
– PS2, PS3, XBOX, XBOX 360, Wii (2006)

A good game to be sure but one plagued with docile battle actions that are anything but quick. The various on-screen instructions call to mind *Resident Evil 4*, but they're slow and boring in comparison. The various vehicular sections ring of being underdeveloped too.

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG
– PS3, XBOX 360, Wii (2006)

Some things work in 3D and some just don't. As *Sonic* has proven time and again, he's of the latter variety. Quite why the Sonic Team can't get this is anyone's guess. *Sonic* is not best fitted to a 3D adventure, nor does he require an open-city environment.



BATMAN BEGINS
– PS2, XBOX, GC (2005)

Splinter Cell meets *Burnout* in another surprisingly dull film tie-in. Part of what makes the racing... er, sorry, *chase sequences* so bad is that they feel completely disconnected from the boring third-person stealth stuff. That and it's just *Burnout* painted black.

SETTING EXAMPLES

Old and new, five of the best genre blenders

RESIDENT EVIL 4 – 2005

We've already mentioned it but *Resident Evil 4* bears repeating as it's one of the greatest games of the last generation. It managed to add life to the unquestionably waning survival horror genre by ramping up the action and introducing Quick Time Events, as well as interactive movie moments.

ELDER SCROLLS: OBLIVION – 2006

Deus Ex was our original choice but *Oblivion* is a more contemporary version of what Ion Storm deemed the 'immersive sim'. Using the RPG staple as its main pull, *Oblivion*, like *Deus Ex* and its sequel *Invisible War*, is also a pseudo-FPS with several fun mini-games (lock picking, alchemy, and so on) and a large simulated world.

SPLINTER CELL DOUBLE AGENT – 2006

Double Agent took the series-standard third-person action and stealth gameplay and mixed dozens of hacking/cracking mini-games with areas that made you swim in freezing waters, parachute into levels and abseil down buildings. The PC, PS3 and Xbox 360 versions are identical and therefore best in the franchise so far.

ALONE IN THE DARK: NEAR DEATH INVESTIGATION – 2007

AITDS is a complete reinvention of the franchise, mixing survival horror (itself derived from adventure and puzzle titles) with driving sections and an RPG-like hub in central park. The carry space restrictions and lack of in-game menus give the game a more strategic edge too.

GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS – 2004

To some people, introducing RPG elements into the series' waning template seemed a natural evolution - but not everyone appreciated it. Having to eat to maintain your stamina, health and figure, *and* work out at the gym amidst completing missions, seemed too much work for some fatties... er, people.

BEN BISHOP

Project Manager, NHL 2K7

On the whole how difficult has it been to make the leap from last-generation to next-generation and have some sports proved more problematic than others?

I can't really speak for the other sports, but for *NHL*, while it was certainly a challenge, it was something we were prepared for. Our goal is always to make the best sports games possible. With the Xbox 360 and PS3, this may require more time and resources than before, but the development team is absolutely up to the task.

Consoles change but sports stay the same. What measures have you put in place to ensure the sports genre evolves and gamers get something different from last-generation titles?

With a one-year development cycle, it's impossible for us to re-do or even just improve every area of the game each year. That allows us to really focus on a handful of specific areas each time around to make them stand out. By continuing to build on a solid foundation, with strong additions each year, the game will feel fresh but still retain its overall level of quality. We're also always looking for new ways to innovate and offer a unique experience along with the standard style of gameplay people are used to. For *NHL 2K7*, our Cinemotion style of presentation seems to fit that category well, and we will continue to look for fun and different ways to keep the game feeling unique and exciting.

What challenges did you face making a game for Sony's new system when compared to others that are available?

It's always a challenge when a new console is launching because it's often very late in the development cycle before the team has the final hardware to work with. Again though, this is something we were prepared for, so while we may have had to crunch a bit, we knew we wanted to be out for launch, so we did everything we could to make that happen. We also had the unique opportunity with the PS3 to be able to utilise the new Sixaxis controller, and I'm really happy with the way we were able to integrate that by mapping it to both checking and Crease Control.

SLAP SHOT

The NHL series has always had a innovative control scheme. Using the two analogue sticks, players can do the wide variety of moves that the pros from the organisation are able to do.

Online gaming is set to be a big part of the PS3 experience; how do you think the online revolution is changing the world of videogames and what have you got planned for Sony's service?

This is an area that is growing at an unbelievable rate and we will continue to do everything we can to get behind the services offered by each of the next-gen consoles. 2K Sports has always been a pioneer in this area, so don't expect that to change. For PS3 specifically this year, we maintain a full set of features, including the ability to play in online leagues and tournaments and play Mini-Rink and Party Mode mini-games online.

Player animation is one are where realism can be hugely improved.

JUST HOW ARE NEXT-GEN SPORTS TITLES RAISING THE BAR?

ROB JONES

Gameplay Producer, NBA 2K7

How has the emergence of next-gen technology helped deliver a closer, more accurate recreation of sport on a home console?

Well, for one thing, in the NBA everyone knows and follows their superstars. The next generation of technology has helped us to enhance both the visual and audio experience so that when you look at a player, you *see* that player. When you hear the sounds of the game, you *feel* those sounds as well. The sheer amount of extra memory, processing power and storage space has also allowed us to personalise the individual superstars of the NBA with their own moves, shots and tendencies, which also extends the recreation of the sport.

Going forward, we anticipate that using the processing power of the units we will be able to revolutionise the way collisions are handled in our games, so that the physicality of the sport can be represented in a way that is more accurate than we have ever been in the past.

What specific elements in the new 2K Sports series could only have been achieved with power of next-generation consoles?

In *NBA 2K7*, it would be the addition of hundreds of individualised moves, as well as graphical feats such as real-time sweat, muscle rigs, and numerous other features. Our aim is to make the games look as real as life, and the Xbox 360 and PS3 are surely allowing us to approach that.

Do you think realistic representations of things like sweat and muscle definition really impact on overall gameplay?

Being a gameplay guy, I would probably say no. However, when you see that the first time, and if implemented in a way to complement the game (like seeing someone, who has worked very hard, sweating at the end of the game) it adds so much to the atmosphere and experience.

Customisation is an ever-increasing element in next-gen titles, what can we expect from the new wave of sports titles and why is it so important?

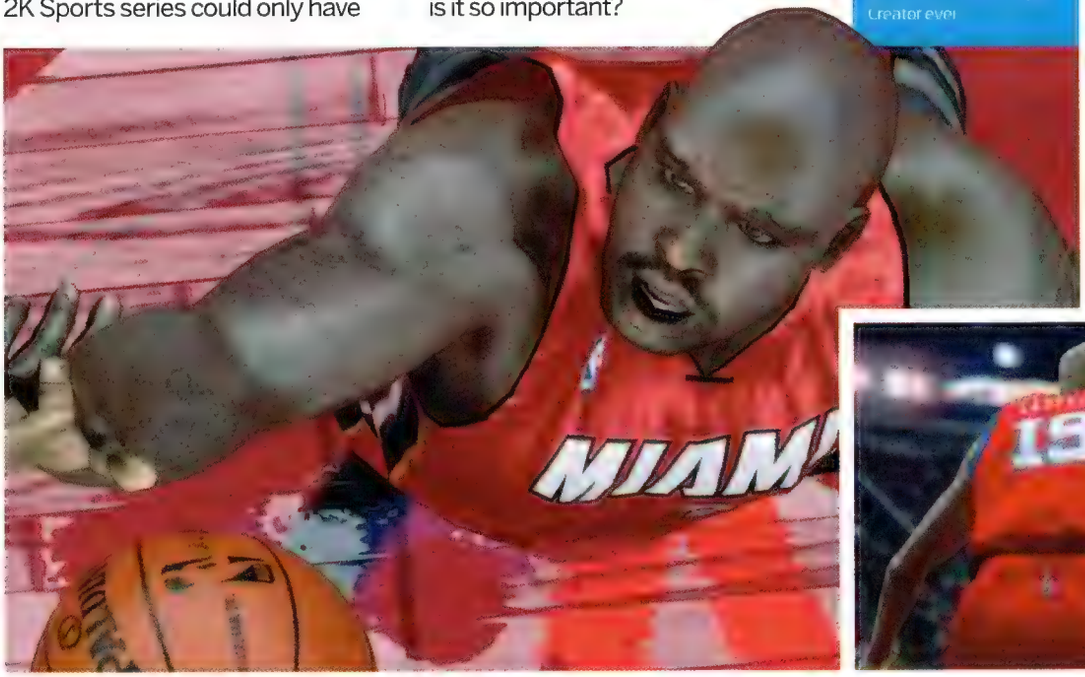
Customisation is the key in sports titles at this point. We will see people import pictures directly from their cameras, computers and PSPs and be able to skin those faces into game characters. The amount of sheer storage space on the Blu-ray will allow for infinite amount of assets to be included (whether it be game art or music). I can definitely see people being able to customise a lot more than has been done in the past.

How will the PS3 fare in the next-gen war. Has it priced itself out of the market, or will the brand continue to dominate?

I think Sony has been very savvy in terms of what they wanted to do with the PS3. They placed Blu-ray technology in the system so that it would be widely adopted by people who love PlayStation, essentially giving them a one-up on HD-DVD. They also have a loyal fanbase who is willing to part with a lot of money in order to have the latest Sony console. I think that they will struggle due to low inventory, and that will allow Microsoft and Nintendo to gain some ground in marketshare.

CAPTURING THE ESSENCE

NBA 2K7 has captured every player's 'play style' which makes them look and feel like the real 'ballers. In addition to the licensed players, *2K7* has the most intricate Player Creator ever.



TwitchGaming

Thoughts, imaginings and opinion from Next3s resident columnist, Twitch

Vegas and whores

They're ruining our industry

RAINBOW *Six Vegas* is an excellent game. I always knew it was going to be special, which is why I made damn sure to get up earlier than usual upon its release. I strolled into HMV, grabbed a copy, slapped £37.95 on the counter and then bided my time at work. I put the game in my Xbox 360 as soon as I got home and immediately fell in love. Suffice it to say I enjoyed the hell out of *Rainbow Six Vegas*... for the whole six hours it took me to complete it.

I'm not overstating that. I played the game over two nights, a couple of hours each. So if anything that's an understatement. Now just try to imagine my disappointment when playing what I feel is one of the best games of 2006 – only to find it's over so soon. It's not an easy game either, so don't mistake its short life span for slack AI. I had to repeat several large sections thanks to my own ineptitude. But this longevity issue only serves to highlight an ever-increasing concern of mine: that graphics whores are ruining the games industry.

With every new console generation they expect – or, more accurately, demand – better graphics and even more power than the previous generation. But as consoles become more powerful, the cost of developing for them also increases to the point where the only way developers can counter that is to work on games with shorter running times. Just look at several next-gen examples from last year: *Prey*, *Splinter Cell: Double Agent*, *Tomb Raider: Legend*, *Call Of Duty 3* and the phenomenal *Gears Of War*. All excellent games to be sure, but with completion times that won't see you spending more than several hours in their company.

We're at the stage where developers are creating games with budgets rivalling Hollywood movies. Which is a fact many people have capitalised on in the press, meaning you're probably already too aware of it by now. However, it also means that with such knowledge it's more than a little disappointing when you buy a particularly high profile game such as *Gears Of War* or *Rainbow Six Vegas*. Everyone is taking about it; the developer has put lots of time and effort into it – not to mention money and resources.

But when it's released the bloody thing only lasts you a couple of evenings at the most. As disappointing as that undoubtedly is it's one of the many high prices we have to pay for all this next-gen malarkey. The other is, of course, innovation. Production costs are higher which means there's more money to lose than ever before if your game guffs it in sales. With that much money at stake can you imagine publishers taking risks on games like *Katamari Damacy*, *Rez*, or *killer7*? People constantly bang on about who's going to win the next-gen console war, but they've forgotten the most important thing: the games.

Kaz Hirai talking bollocks at an event does not mean Microsoft will win the war. Peter Moore making quips about the failed UK launch at TGS doesn't either. Nor does the spec of each machine when you really, truly, think about it. As much as the graphics whores would hate to admit it, hardware won't win this war: software will – and original, innovative software at that. Which is an area Sony could dominate, thanks to its E-distribution network and the release of games made specifically for it. Spearheading the bunch, of course, is David Jaffe's *Calling All Cars*. Sure, it looks like a mix between *Twisted Metal* and *Cell Damage* but it serves to highlight Sony's goal to produce only original titles for online distribution, rather than uploading classic games to its database.

I think graphics whores really are ruining this industry; however, that doesn't mean they are destroying it. As much as the length of games bugs me, I still take solace in the fact that it's an exciting time to be playing them. Certainly with the original, innovative, and wacky stuff going up through Sony's network at the moment. In the case of *Rainbow Six Vegas* itself, the length of the single-player is very disappointing... but then that doesn't factor in the replayability, co-operative and online functions of the game – elements that will surely give the game the longevity its single-player lacks. There's that word again, 'online'. Or, more accurately, 'the future'.

Twitch

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PS3 Publisher//Sega Developer//Sega AM2 Genre//Beat 'em up Players//1-2
Website//www.virtuafighter.com/ Release Date//March

Tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap... lose

Virtua Fighter 5

VIRTUA *Fighter* has never been your average beat-'em-up game series – far from it. It's not about just randomly hitting the face buttons as fast as you can, praying you'll unleash something devastating. No – it's about learning different combos, having precision and knowing when best to counter, block or attack your foe with accuracy. It's about choosing specific characters that best appeal to your tastes and subsequently learning their style and moves as though you were studying Monkey Kung Fu, Ninjutsu, Jeet Kune Do or any other style in real life. What it isn't about is tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap.

But that was the only sound heard echoing throughout Next3 tower as around a dozen or so fist-hungry journalists from sister and cousin magazines played *Virtua Fighter 5*. Like most situations with games such as this there were the usual protestations that it was/wasn't as good as *Tekken*, *Dead Or Alive*, *Soul Calibur*, *Street Fighter II/III* and so on. But you can't please everyone – that's par for the course. However, one thing everyone did agree on was how pretty it is. Running via HDMI through our 42-inch HDTV, *VF5* impressed everyone with its unquestionably glossy, gorgeous and detailed veneer. What didn't impress everyone was a certain Next3 writer and his annoying strategy of button-mashing his way to victory.

Back in issue two we said that balance was the key to *Virtua Fighter*'s success. More succinctly, how this series can take over a dozen different characters with varying fighting styles and still balance the experience so each opponent has an equal opportunity to win. Even those with a fleeting interest in the franchise are tasked with test driving different characters and learning fighters' ins and outs before unleashing them in battle.

As we so elegantly put it way back when: "*Virtua Fighter* is about thought, not flash." Hence why a number of those journalists were a little angry with this writer's constant P+P+P+K combo. "You're a cheap bastard C***g" one exclaimed. "There are other moves beyond punch!" shouted another. They were right, of course... but this was all a ruse to get their eager hands away from the Sixaxis so that we could ultimately bring you this preview. And once our intrepid writer scared away the small crowd, we finally managed to get deep down and dirty with what will surely be another jewel in Sega AM2's crown.

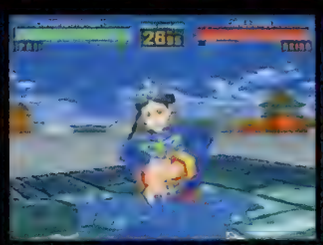
Speaking of which, the developer certainly seems to have done enough this time to ensure both ends of the spectrum – hardcore fans and newbies alike – will be pleased with the result. Not that anything has been changed too drastically, you understand. Though

Virtua Evolution

A trip back through the fighting four... or five. Could be six

VIRTUA FIGHTER
SEGA SATURN, 1995

Back in 1993, gamers were used to 2D fighting games with outlandish characters, fireballs and sonic booms. *Virtua Fighter* snuck its way into arcades and, with its more realistic aesthetic and fully 3D graphics, it wowed many. Unfortunately, the Saturn port, released to contend with Namco's *Tekken* on home console systems, didn't handle the 3D graphics too well. Sega amended the game's problems with *Virtua Fighter Remix* - with refined gameplay and better graphics. Something it would repeat with VF ten years later.



VIRTUA FIGHTER 2
SEGA SATURN, 1995

In winter of the same year *Virtua Fighter Remix* was released, Sega wiped all thoughts of criticism aside when it released *Virtua Fighter 2* on home consoles. *VF* marked the shift from 2D graphics to 3D, but it was this sequel that catapulted the franchise gameplay-wise. The move list was more varied than *Virtua Fighter* and most fighting games of the time. 1,200 different moves attributed to just three action buttons - Punch, Kick and Attack. VF2 proved that the Saturn was a serious console contender.

VIRTUA FIGHTER 3TB
SEGA DREAMCAST, 1999

Despite being popular in Japan and signalling an impressive leap in graphical capabilities, *Virtua Fighter 3tb* is regarded as a bit of a disappointment. The inclusion of a fourth button for dodging seemed ill advised, muddying the simplistic beauty of the established gameplay. Despite its amazing graphics on the Dreamcast, it didn't quite match the model-3 arcade tech that it originated from - but that only upset the hardcore fans. Unfortunately *VF3tb* ran straight into *Soul Calibur*, a triple-A title that subsequently wiped out all thoughts of *3tb*.

VIRTUA FIGHTER 4
PS2, 2002

Much like the original *Virtua Fighter*, AM2 released two versions of *Virtua Fighter 4*. It was the first released on PS2 and, unlike the first, was the best in the franchise so far. It also saw the inclusion of two new characters: Brad the Thai Kickboxer, and Goh, a Judo specialist. Some argue these characters were a bit too *Tekken*-ish. *VF4* also took the series into darker territory with its raw style, replacing the balletic atmosphere of old with a much darker and serious one. *VF4* may have been the best by that point, but as *Evolution* proved, there was still work left to be done.

VIRTUA FIGHTER 4: EVOLUTION PS2, 2003

Thanks to the excellent foundation set by *Virtua Fighter 4*, *Evolution* didn't have to change too much to secure itself as the best game in the series. The CD format of *4* was replaced with DVD - thus clamping down the loud disc reading and reducing the jittery menu animation that plagued the preview version. It also balanced the gameplay a hell of a lot more than *4*. Released in the UK at full price, this fairly extensive update was three times more expensive than the US version. Still, it featured the most refined gameplay thus far and the best graphics to date. Easily the best *Virtua Fighter*.

CONTINUATION //

with *Virtua Fighter* pros the term 'drastic' is subjective to each of them. After all, it's only hardcore fans that would notice such things as Jeffry's Splash Mountain throw consisting of new, faster animation; Pai having a new punch and sweep combo; or that Kage has a new stance. Superfluous to some but important to others.

'Others' of course referring to the hardcore crowd – who are likely to lap up new features such as the frame counter in Dojo mode, or that it now offers two players the opportunity to spar it out with no timer, ringouts or health meter. Requested by fans and implemented by the developer, this sort of thing shows willingness in AM2 to listen to and respect the feedback from the audience it creates this series for. Which is the best route to crafting an experience everyone is likely to enjoy.

The Dojo mode features some of the most prominent changes, or 'enhancements'. It's essentially the same all-in-one training mode of old, but it's been revamped a little for *VF5*. You still have the ability to tweak your opponent's AI so it can mimic live fighters, or many of those you'll encounter in Quest mode or Versus. You address such things as attack, block, and stance. You're even free to reconfigure the arenas; concentrating on destructible environments, practicing ringouts, or juggling combos off walls in enclosed areas. You can also defend yourself against ringouts, obviously.

Added at the fans behest is the addition of a second player to spar with. The two of you can duke it out for as long as you like with no health meter. Dojo mode basically has no limits. You can practise for any length of time, either on your own or with a friend. There's no fear of fights arbitrarily ending after 30 seconds either and watching two pros going at it in Dojo would surely be a thing of beauty. Relentless wouldn't even begin to describe it.

In classic *Virtua Fighter* fashion the command list doesn't display what face buttons you need to press – rather the corresponding move. Instead of △+△+△+○ appearing in the box at the top of the screen you instead see P+P+P+K. Every time you successfully strike the enemy it highlights whether it was a low, mid or high attack – all in the name of helping to make you a better fighter.

The best new addition to Dojo mode, and one that is sure to excite hardcore fans, is the frame counter. Perhaps a random series of numbers to the casual player, but a godsend

Insert amusing caption here. Winner gets a P+P+P+K combo in the face.

to everyone with a vested interest in learning the science of this series. Essentially, the frame counter displays the number of frames of animation involved in each and every move. Pay close attention and you'll be able to learn exactly when the best moment to counter, parry or block is – as well a crowbar in your own attacks.

It's an incidental feature, there for you to use by enabling it in the options menu. You don't even have to touch it, though we're more than sure many serious fighters out there will. Those same fighters will most likely be taking their favourite characters for a test drive upon starting *Virtua Fighter 5*, to see what things have been changed this time.

With some characters the changes and new tweaks are more apparent than others. Pai's strategies and combos remain largely the same; however, her 270 throw seems much easier to do on the Sixaxis' D-pad than it did on DualShock. Whether that's the game itself or the PS3's pad having a better, more responsive D-pad we aren't sure. She retains the quick speed she's always had and her swallow kicks are still good throw set-ups.

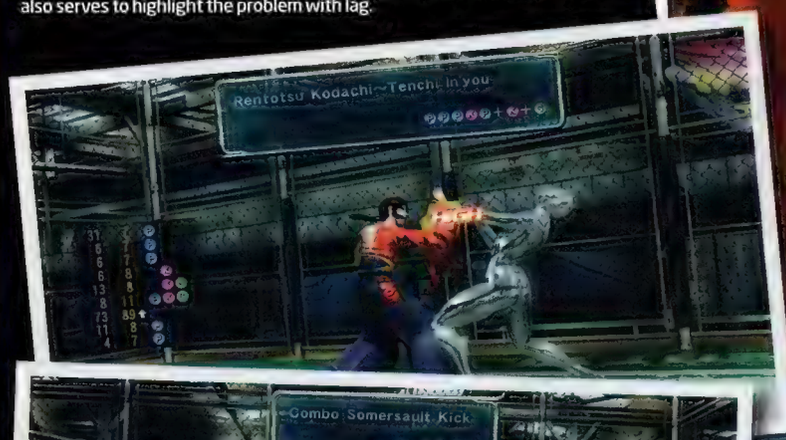
Vanessa, now arguably the hottest character in the series, has a new punch counter. In previous games she would catch

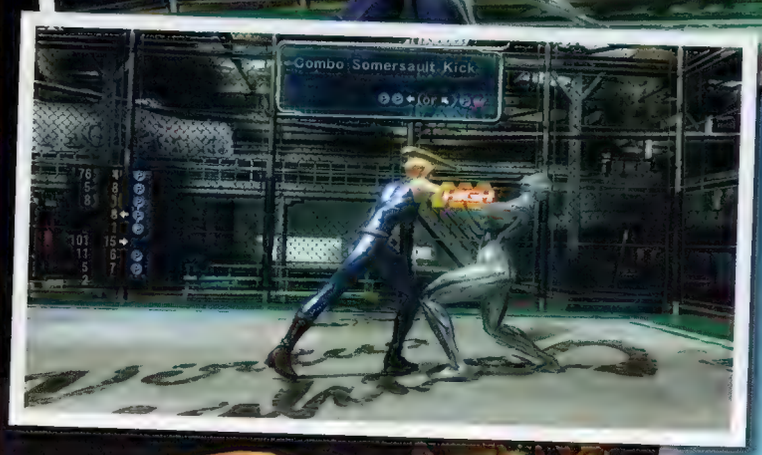
"The best new addition to Dojo mode is the frame counter. It's a godsend to everyone with a vested interest in learning the science of the series"

Enter the Dojo
And leave a champion

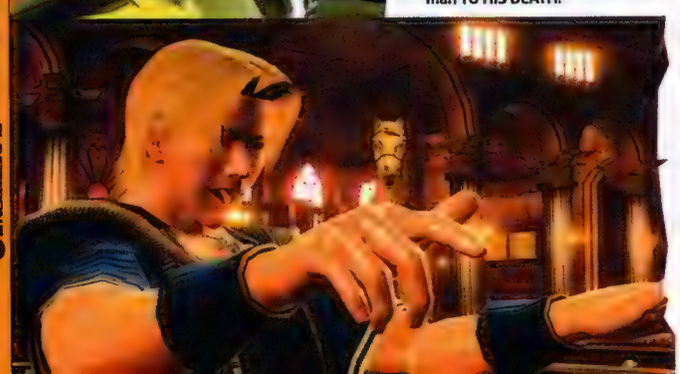
As you can see, the frame counter displays what several commands you've just performed, as well as the number of frames of animation used in movements. This way, hardcore *VF* fans and pros alike can take the science of *Virtua Fighter* to the very next level.

However, it also shows why lag could be problem for serious *VF* fans, especially those who take the time to learn the game. While it's all good and proper to master the correct frames used in specific acts, the delay caused by lag could seriously handicap online games. Not only has AM2 incorporated something undoubtedly usefully to those who really care, it also serves to highlight the problem with lag.





One of many amusing victory scenes. Here, El Blaze drop kicks the camera man TO HIS DEATH!



CONTINUATION//

an opponent's punch and kick or throw them for an arm break. But in *VF5* she has the ability to turn her opponent away from her, which is obviously good for ringouts or setting up combos or further mix-ups. Akira is still hard as hell to play. His basic stuff is all there and present – dashing elbow, double jump kicks and so on. His punch-and-grab throw is different this time, while the same move doesn't appear to have been changed for other characters. At least from what we could tell.

There are more for other characters but we're obviously pressed for space – suffice it to say that the aforementioned gives a good idea of the kind of alterations and refinements AM2 has been making with the characters. Arguably, the two biggest additions to *Virtua Fighter 5* are in its character roster: El Blaze and Eileen, thus notching the roster up to 18. You can read more about them in our Eileen and El Blaze boxouts.

That previous comment refers to an element of the all-important Quest mode. Here, you can take your chosen fighter around various arcades, fighting opponents whose AI is based on the fighting styles of some of the best arcade players in Japan. The technology used to capture the AI is the same that was used in *VF4*, which enabled players to create and train AI-controlled characters that you could then pit against friends. Unfortunately, this feature was dropped from *Virtua Fighter 4*, for some reason.

It doesn't make a return here either, though it would have been great to be able to train an AI character and then let friends or other fighters take them on. There's every chance, given how many people enjoyed this feature, that AM2 will release it in the future for download. While there's no online mode in *Virtua Fighter 5* the developer has certainly expressed interest in micro transactions.

The Quest mode is very similar to *Virtua Tennis 3*'s World Tour mode, which will come as little surprise to people, minus the pros in the latter contacting you and sending you notices, or asking you to train with them. In Quest mode you're travelling from one arcade to the next, battling in each, gaining in rank throughout. You

El Blaze of glory

New virtual fighter #1

Unless you have a thing for attractive 14-year olds, and why the hell would you, sicko? El Blaze is easily the most intriguing of the two... what with his Lucha Libre look and over-the-top wrestling style. That and because he really has some of the worst lines in a *Virtua Fighter* game to date.

Given his penchant for wrestling, much of Blaze's style centres on his various throws. They aren't quite as damaging as Wolf or Jeffry's, but this guy is quick so they are much easier to set up. Blaze has a sabaki, thus deflecting attacks when he spins into them, so it's ideal for setting up throws. Blaze's strategy seems to be to confuse his opponent with a flurry of quick, tricky attacks of a strictly wrestling kind and then when the enemy blocks, he throws them across the arena.

start at the lowest end of the spectrum, 10th Kyu, and slowly work your way up through Dan, then to the highest rankings where the best of the best are ready to fight you.

A green meter at the bottom left of the screen informs you of your rank status and thus when you're going to fight your next ranked match. The outcome of these ranked matches sees you advance into those upper echelons. You can win certain items and other paraphernalia from defeating opponents or in Item Battles, where a small treasure chest is displayed at the bottom of the screen. The winner here is the one that gets the treasure – which is likely a costume change or some kind of on-screen decoration. As superfluous as it may seem, it goes a long way to defining your preferred character from the rest, even if it is only a new pair of shades you've bought for Brad or some fresh shorts for Wolf.

As well as winning items in various battles there's also a shop you can visit to purchase them too. Credit points are awarded for winning ranked matches and it's in these shops that you can spend said credits on whatever it is you can afford – emblems, signature letters that appear on-screen, new masks, and so on. It's worth considering and isn't exactly paramount to the experience but, as we previously mentioned, it goes a long way to defining your own character. Just a pity you can't show them off online.

"The same game we know and love without being the exact same game we know and love"

You can also assign written comments to your characters that appear during the loading screens before each match. Nothing more than an opportunity for you to gloat, taunt or trash-talk your opponent. But hopefully you'll think of something much more amusing and creative than "MASHED POTATOES BITCH!!!!!!" – which is what we came up with.

Beyond the Quest mode there's the requisite Arcade and Versus modes, the former of which is your classic single-player *Virtua Fighter* and the latter two-player battles. As we've mentioned in the pages of Next3 before, AM2 is not exactly working on the level of Merchant Ivory when it comes to storylines. But that doesn't make is any less entertaining... surmising, of course, that you're entertained by that historical crap Merchant Ivory does. Kage returns at the centre of the plot, still trying to quash the evil J6 Corporation – while fisherman Jeffry is still trying helplessly to capture the shark that has tormented him for too long. Upon hearing that the J6 Corp has the shark he joins a tournament they're running to get it back. So he can battle against it himself. Of course.

There are over a dozen arenas to battle in and they're all equally unbelievable in their majesty. Incandescent bloom effects shine over mountain peaks, puddles litter a dark street in a busy city, the stars shine in a bright and beautiful night sky. It's gorgeous. But it's the incidental stuff that really impresses. For example, tiles shatter beneath you on the Great Wall arena and sometimes leave a small crater. Clear and visible snow trails in Snow Mountain are another highlight, especially if you sidestep an enemy, criss-crossing over each other's trail. Falling cherry blossoms don't influence the fight in any way in the Temple arena, but they sure look pretty. Realistic water effects are abound in several levels, ranging from the wide-open River, where fighters battle on a giant raft perfect for wet ringouts.

Like previous *Virtua Fighter* games there's always something happening in the background, irrespective of how small that is. Whether it's people dancing and drinking at a dinner party, crowds cheering in the futuristic cage level or cars tearing through the busy background of a rain-soaked city street, there's

"Virtua Fighter 5 could potentially be a much better experience on PS3"

Vanessa has grown from a lady with thighs far too massive to this pretty little vixen.

Come on Eileen

New virtual fighter #2

Eileen hails from the martial arts school of Monkey Kung Fu, which sometimes looks almost as amusing as it sounds. Sure, it looks an awful lot like a melange of flailing around and throwing her feet and fisticuffs any which way she can - but that's her style... the way of the monkey. It's a conscious move on AM2's part because Eileen's swift and erratic style is to confuse her opponent more than anything, tricking them into retaliating and thus leaving them open for attack.

She's very good at dodging/ducking attacks, in part thanks to her small frame and the vivaciousness of only being 14-years old. You perve. As some people have already noticed, Eileen's unpredictable technique is very reminiscent of the drunkard Shun. Different fighting styles, but the pair are adept at tricking their opponents into making the wrong moves - or right, depending on how you look at it. She's very efficient at escaping throws and holds too. It's very clear where AM2's head is at concerning the look of Eileen, and the fact you can win or buy a schoolgirl outfit for her.

CONTINUATION

always something happening elsewhere. Though it's never enough to distract you.

With the recent news of *VF5* finding its way on to the 360, there are many broken hearts out there. But the truth is, much like the *SSX* games, you'll find a better experience with *Virtua Fighter 5*, control pad-wise, on Sixaxis than you will on the 360's controller. First of all the latter doesn't have the two extra shoulder buttons, instead opting for two triggers and shoulder bumpers. Which means hastily moving your left and right fingers from one to the other won't be as swift as it would with the shoulder buttons on Sixaxis – whereas R1, R2 and L1 are attacks and L2 is a shortcut.

Second, and most important here, is the D-pad. Bottom line: the D-pad on Microsoft's controller sucks when compared to Sixaxis. Despite being an excellent controller for FPSs it's nonetheless going to make *Virtua Fighter 5* much more of a problem for those who choose to play cross-platform with controllers. Sure, it sounds bias for us to sing praises for the PS3 controller, what with us being a single format PlayStation 3 magazine. But the truth is both controllers have their plusses and minuses. The 360 controller of course has rumble and is much better for any FPS, while Sixaxis is lighter, has the tilt potential and excellent shoulder triggers that make racing games feel better.

While there's still no online multiplayer and while that's disappointing you must respect AM2's decision to wait until most people have net connections that aren't plagued by lag before even considering it. Sure games such as *Dead Or Alive 4* on the 360 have managed online multiplayer, but lag is still a problem. That doesn't mean AM2 isn't going to continue support of *Virtua Fighter 5* online, in fact, quite the contrary. With the developer interested in microtransactions we could see various updates and upgrades to the game, as influenced by the constant tinkering with the arcade version.

The PS3 *Virtua Fighter 5* is based on *Version B* of the arcade system. With the hard drive space and online network there's nothing stopping AM2 releasing overhauls or additional content that way. We hope so, anyway. Certainly, with *Tekken: Dark Resurrection* appearing in online form on the PS Network and working beautifully, this could hopefully mark a new direction for developers of games such as this. Putting games straight on to the Network cuts out the middleman and presents a much more lucrative endeavour for the developer and Sony than it would had the game been released on shelves. Whether you believe downloadable content is the future of this industry is up to you. But given how *Tekken* has turned out in its downloadable form, we'd be surprised if more developers didn't follow suit. Either way, gamers should expect more *VF5* content in the future – whether that's AI based on new arcade fighters from Japan, items or emblems and so on. This also highlights how *VF5* could potentially be a much better experience on PS3.

Our time spent playing the game revealed that, while it's no massive overhaul for the series, and that to casual gamers the updates to this fourth official sequel might not seem that huge; we can tell you that in its current stage it features enough to satiate its core audience. When a franchise has been running for as long as *Virtua Fighter* has, its developer needs to ensure it's doing enough to evolve the experience without stepping too far outside the box that established it. VF5 does that.

It's the same game we know and love without being the exact same game we know and love. There's enough new content added to the formula without altering it too much. Whether that satisfies you is down to your experience with this series and the true measure of your fandom. Which obviously excludes those who prefer to tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap...

%complete

PS3 **Publisher**//Koei **Developer**//In-house **Genre**//Racing **Players**//1-8
Website//www.gamecity.ne.jp/fatal **Release Date**//March

An entirely different franchise to WipEout

Fatal Inertia

YEAH this definitely has nothing to do with *WipEout*. For one it hasn't been developed by Psygnosis or Sony's Liverpool Studio, and instead its relatively hit-and-miss Japanese developer Koei – whose only real success has been *Guitaroo Man* and *G1 Jockey* (and that was only a success among the horsey set) – is at the helm.

See? *WipEout* and *Fatal Inertia* are two totally different games. Sure they both feature hover cars that race against each other, blowing their competitors up with weapons; they are also set in a post-apocalyptic world where extreme racing has become the primary form of entertainment for Earth's jaded population. But that's where the similarities end and what's left makes for a truly original racing game... that is also a bit like *F-Zero* and *X-GRA:Extreme-G Racing Association*.

Okay, enough with the obvious comparisons; there are a few things different in *Fatal Inertia* to all the other futuristic racing games. You're quite far off the ground for starters. The use of height, rather than track positioning, to gain an advantage also gives the game a distinguishing feature that ensures it offers something extra, compared to other titles in its genre. Move up and above your rivals before then swooping down quickly when a tunnel or rocky archway appears. This way you're not constricted to following the pack, and it also means you're not getting annoyed when someone bashes you out of your perfect racing line. Of course you can't just go off on your own for a wee dally about the course, as there is a route you must follow. It is marked out by the large circular checkpoints that you have to go through, unless you want your vehicle to explode. But at least this makes for a slightly more entertaining race than you would have if you were just attempting to manoeuvre corners correctly.

As you can alter the height of your vehicle while racing, it dispels the feeling of monotony, adding variety to the gameplay and ensures you're not just racing through the same laps over and over again. This therefore offers you the opportunity to use different tactics in order to gain a few places in the field. For example, routes that were previously blocked off may become available later on in the race when structures and the landscape are destroyed by the weapon fire that has been released. Hopefully this means that, like in *MotorStorm*, there will be plenty of alternative routes through the tracks that will make the whole racing experience interesting and tactical.

Another appealing aspect of *Fatal Inertia* is the scenery – it's destructible. Not fully, but you will see a lot of potential in your surroundings as you fly by. If you're chasing after the leader of the pack then you'll not only have to worry about who is chasing you and the backwards-firing guns from the guy in front, you'll also have to worry about all the scenery that could come crashing down on to your vehicle.

In the mountainous stages there are massive boulders perilously balanced on the top of stalagmites and if the leader shoots at them they will come tumbling down on top of your vehicle, wiping it out of the race. This also goes for the archways and other structures on the course, adding another element to the already-hectic race that you will have to compensate for. There are a couple of great things about this though, one is that you'll feel like a driving god – or at least Charlie Sheen in *The Wraith* if you can avoid the tumbling boulders – and the second reason is that you can do it to the other racers as well.

Although there are quite a few weapons to use in the game, nothing feels quite so satisfying as dropping a ton of rock on someone's head. The destroyed bits of the course break up into large boulders when you hit them and then the physics engine takes over, carrying them down in a convincing manner as they crash and bash into any vehicles in their way. If

"Nothing feels as satisfying as dropping a ton of rock on someone's head"

Ride of your life

Choose between the four classes of hover car, they're all a bit different...

Phoenix Class

The hover cars in the Phoenix Class are the good all-rounders. Or you could look at them as being boringly average: average speed, average acceleration, average handling. But they're probably the best for beginners with average skills.

Mercury Class

Like the Roman god and the planet, the Mercury Class is initially all about speed. They screech out of the starting grid and accelerate quickly to their top speed. Unfortunately, their top speed leaves something to be desired. Namely speed.

Aurora Class

Looks pointy, doesn't it? Well it's pointy for a reason and that reason is speed! It's like it took all of the Mercury Class cars' speed and swapped it for acceleration. So it takes a while to reach its top speed and this makes it rubbish if you crash a lot.

Titan Class

The tank of the group, which means it goes a bit slower but can carry more weapons. If someone gets in front of you then you can just blow them out of the way and laugh when they explode all over the screen.

"To get access to more powerful weaponry, you have to fly over the pick-up icons"

CONTINUATION //

your opponents get hit by any of these they can be knocked out of the race for a long enough time to give you the chance to gain a decent lead.

There are more ways to guarantee you take first place and stand on the hover-podium, other than crushing your opponents. The selection of weapons that you collect in the game can be used to cause screaming engine death to your fellow racers. So far we have only seen a few of these in action; however, it does seem like an original set of explosives and other destructive implements are on offer to have at your disposal.

Each ship has a standard shot, looking like some sort of anti-matter machine gun fire, which is useful for badgering your opponents and knocking the scenery to pieces with. Unfortunately it's pretty doubtful that it is very strong at all and you probably won't be able to completely wreck a ship with it, but at least you can pressure your opponents with it until they make a mistake.

To access more powerful weaponry you have to fly over the pick-up icons dotted around the course. Once you've got on them, you then have the ability to cause some major damage or totally mess up a contestant's race. In one such example you can fire a rocket that attaches itself to the target ship and just sits there – until you activate it, that is. Since all the ships work on a method of propulsion that requires them to go fast mostly in a straight line to achieve flight, any deviation from this will send them careening all over the place, and that's exactly what the rocket does. When it is activated, the rocket powers-up and acts as extra thrusters, but because this thrust isn't balanced (as the rocket usually lands on a wing of a craft), the ship spirals out of control; hopefully into the side of a mountain, or, better yet, a destructible mountain that sets off a chain reaction, raining rocks down on the other racers.

Ooh, it's like that bit in *Star Wars* with all the ace acting and that.

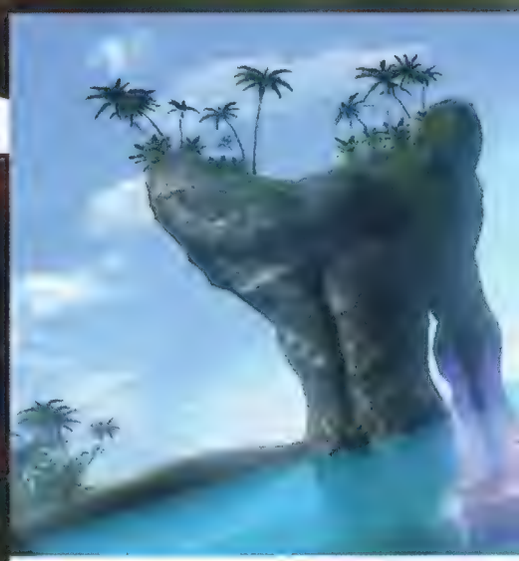
Why will you never starve on a beach? Because of all the sand-which-is there!

There is another fantastic weapon that is ejected out of the back of your ship and sets up a massive force field. Not one that just causes damage as the other racers pass through it, oh no, this one seems to erect a huge rubber sheet, which means when the other ships get caught in it, it causes the rubber to stretch. Then, just when you think they are about to break through the level of elasticity, it flings them away, making them lose quite a few places and probably humiliating them quite a bit. Well, they should have been quick enough to avoid it, shouldn't they?

Among the other weapons is a rather effective smoke screen – let this off and clouds of dense white smoke with plume forth from the rear of your ship obscuring the vision of anyone who gets behind you. While this may not affect the AI-controlled ships much, it does totally ruin your vision and could see you crashing into a wall or, even worse, missing a checkpoint. This will be much more fun when playing

Whoever said orginality in videogames was dead hasn't seen *Fatal Inertia*. Hahahaha.

Like the Speeder-bike chase in *Return Of The Jedi* you have to watch out for the trees.



There are leeches in the swamp water - space leeches, they'd suck you dry in seconds.

Horses for courses

Things that you'll drive by

There will be seven maps in *Fatal Inertia* and each of these will contain a selection of circuits to race around. So far we've seen tracks where you have to race over flowing magma, even tracks where you have to dive into the sea and race underwater. Then there are some courses that are based around rocky mountainous areas, but these are pretty much brown and uninteresting; this is unlike the races that occur on desert islands, which look amazing with their palm trees and sandy beaches. It's not just corners that you have to get around, there will also be various obstacles on each course just waiting for you slam into them.

CONTINUATION //

against other human opponents online and no doubt encourage a hell of a lot of name calling from your blinded victims.

In addition to the other projectiles and magnetic weapons that are able to slow down the other racers, there is a really cool grappling hook that you can use to shoot at an opponent, then when it grabs them in a vice-like grip you can fire off the other end at the ground or some rock. This will anchor it your rival's ship, bringing them crashing down to earth or into the side of a cliff. It not only looks funny, it'll cause immense damage as well as denting their pride, not to mention their chassis, quite a bit.

Speaking of chassis, you will notice from the boxout that there are four different classes of ships available; ranging from nimble, speedy ones; to powerful, but slow, crafts. Fans of the *Need For Speed* games can also rejoice because there is much modding to be done. You can choose different colours, custom spray jobs, and decals for your ship – you can also change the shape of the ship by attaching different noses, cockpits, wings and spoilers to your vehicle. Pimp my hover ride, indeed. Make no mistake; the extra add-ons and accessories aren't just for cosmetic

The loadout

Guns don't kill people, magnets do

Most racing games are boring because your only enemies are the racing line and corners. However, throw a few weapons into the mix and then you've got something a bit more exciting. Who dislikes the that feeling you get when you're about to cross the finishing line in first, only to have your vehicle explode around you? That's awesome. Among the weapons that will cause you hassle when they are fired at you are; cluster bombs, smoke screens, force fields, magnets, and rockets. There is also a time dilator and that sounds like fun. Dilating rules.

***Fatal Inertia* is real departure from Koei's usual huh-huh-hnugh gaming fare.**

reasons – although, admittedly, the paint job is – selecting additional parts and products will enhance the ship's abilities and could offer it better stability, acceleration, handling, and so on.

Whether or not *Fatal Inertia* will utilise the PlayStation 3's tilt control hasn't been revealed just yet; however, we think it's safe to assume that the game could incorporate the use of the Sixaxis' functions during gameplay in the same way as you would when flying dragons in *Lair*. It's almost certain to require a great deal of practice to do so properly – if you don't want to crash into each and every mountain or tree – but it will be an interesting way to play the game.

While there hasn't been an announcement detailing the various songs that will be featuring on *Fatal Inertia*'s soundtrack, we're guessing that they will be original compositions, rather than the selection of awesome songs that featured on *WipEout 2097*. Who can forget those classic racing moments that were accompanied by The Future Sound Of London's track *We Have Explosive*?

Oh. It seems like we have put *WipEout* back into the discussion. Well come on, we did manage not to mention it for at least four pages, and the comparison is always going to be there. In fact the standfirst for this was going to be "he-he-he-he-he! Wipeout!" but we realised that would be rubbish. Then again, if *Fatal Inertia* can match the speed and exhilaration of the *WipEout* games and throw in enough awesome next-gen PlayStation 3 graphics, Koei could be onto its biggest seller since, hmm, *Dynasty Warriors*? Oh.

complete

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"Selecting additional parts and products will enhance your ship's abilities, offering it better stability, accelerating and handling..."

"It's fair to say with some certainty that this will be one of the best titles of 2007"

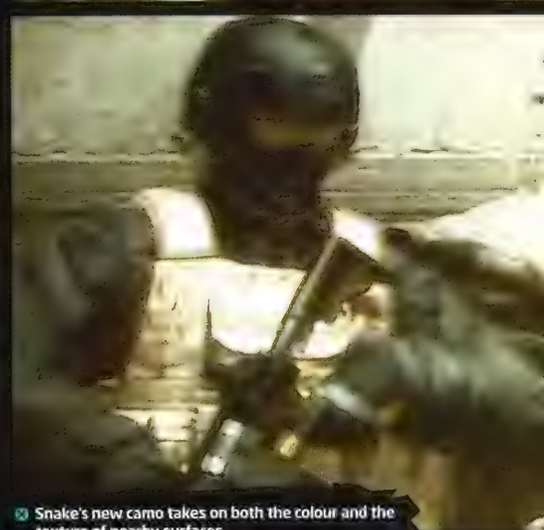
Snake gets arms

Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns Of The Patriots

PS3 **Publisher**//Konami **Developer**//Kojima Productions **Genre**//Stealth **Players**//1
Website//www.konami.jp/gs/game/metalgear/ **Release date**//TBA

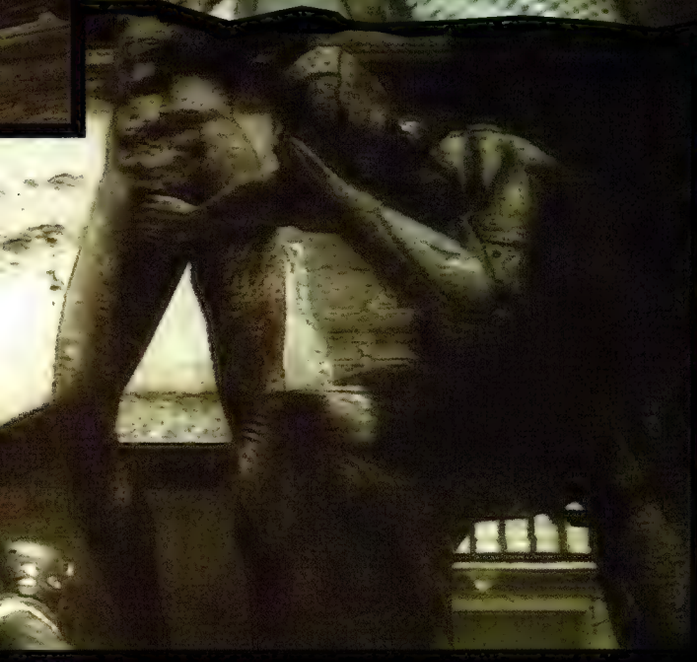
WHILE *Portable Ops* may be looking like something of a disappointment, it's fair to say with some certainty that *MGS4: Guns Of The Patriots* will be one of the best titles of 2007. Sure, there are always going to be those gamers hanging on to the past and expecting something akin to the previous titles, but we are not only looking forward to a game of immense quality, but a good deal of innovation as well.

In terms of narrative, a recent interview with Kojima has revealed that the injections Snake gives himself are pivotal to the plot in addition to the fact that you won't be playing as Raiden – this is because Kojima feels he made a mistake with *MGS2*. The connection between *Portable Ops* and *Guns Of The Patriots* was further pushed as well, but Kojima is still tight lipped about specifics. However, what is news to us is that weapon and weapon modification will form a major part of the gameplay – we're guessing in a similar way to the camo system in *MGS3*. So it's safe to say that Kojima isn't going to let anything less than perfect loose from his studio this time around.



Snake's new camo takes on both the colour and the texture of nearby surfaces.

With the full camouflage kit on, even Snake's face can be hidden.



The new metal gears have these creepy tendrils to feel around with.

Don't hate, communicate

...with the touch of a button

While in reality it has only been a year since the original *GRAW* title was released, in the game world both time and technology has progressed much further – meaning that your handy Cross-Com system contains loads of new features. With just the flick of a switch your can obtain info on enemy formations, the location of land support and the whereabouts of injured team-mates, as now you have new medic soldiers that can heal fallen comrades.

For this game, Ubisoft is very excited about the realistic smoke effects, but we're more excited about dishing out death like some sort of demon cobra.

They say war is hell but from where we're sitting it looks very pretty.

Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2

The war shooter with added 'spirit'

PS3 **Publisher**//Ubisoft **Developer**//Red Storm Studios **Genre**//First-person shooter **Players**//1-16 **Website**//www.ghostrecon.uk.ubi.com **Release date**//April

THE term 'next-gen' gets bandied around a lot, in fact at the end of a typical day our fingers are often bloody and bruised from tapping the damn phrase into our keyboard. But if there's one publisher that actually understands what it takes to produce a truly 'next-gen' game, it's French games giant Ubisoft. With a range of titles including; *Rainbow Six Vegas*, *Splinter Cell Double Agent* and *Ghost Recon*, it's single-handily giving gamers a reason to buy an Xbox 360, and if the recent announcement of *GRAW 2* is anything to go by, it's looking to deliver an equally impressive line-up for the PS3.

Set in 2014, *Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2* follows the events of the original (award-winning) *GRAW* during a civil war between Mexican loyalists and insurgent rebel forces. Captain Scott Mitchell and his team of ghosts are called in to neutralise the potential threat to the US and fight against both enemy and elements in order to be the heroes of the day. Day/night cycles and a constantly changing weather system are being used to create a very unpredictable battlefield spread over mountain terrains, harsh dessert and the gringo-infested plains of El Paso, Texas.

It's true the fighting has got more intense, but help is at hand in the form of a souped-up Cross-Com system, additional types of military support and a meaty arsenal of deadly toys to play with. There's no news yet as to what we can expect from the multiplayer but it's sure to feature a wealth of modes that take advantage of the PlayStation Network. As well as these new elements, developer Red Storm is said to be taking what worked in the original experience and cranking it up to 11, and with a BAFTA award for 'Game of the Year' already in the trophy cabinet, that can only mean good things for *Ghost*-loving gamers out there.

%complete

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Dark Sector

The dark is worse than the fight

PS3 **Publisher**//D3 Publisher **Developer**//Digital Extremes **Genre**//Third-person shooter **Players**//1 **Website**//www.darksector.com **Release date**//2007

SINCE its debut almost three years ago we've been in the dark as to its direction and PS3 potential but all that changed this month when D3 showed a demo of the new and improved *Dark Sector*. Dispensing with much of the space-age aspects, the game has retained its sci-fi feel and sees the main character Hayden Tenno, dispatched to the former Soviet Union to cover up a particularly sticky mess.

However, in the fictional state of Lasria, a war is raging between mutated super-beings known as the infected and a rebel force trying to stop them. But where does Tenno sit in this war? Slap bang in the middle as exposure to a toxic substance has left him partly infected. His arm has mutated into an awesome tri-bladed weapon called a Glaive, which proves his main weapon of destruction.

With the likes of *Resistance* already on the way, Digital Extremes looks to be trying to produce a shooter that's just a little different, and the game's stunning presentation suggests that *Dark Sector* could be a shining light.

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Colin McRae: DIRT

Codemasters reveal its dirty little secret

PS3 **Publisher**//Codemasters **Developer**//In-house **Genre**//Racing **Players**//1-8 **Website**//www.codemasters.com/dirt **Release date**//2007

WITH the likes of *MotorStorm* and *Sega Rally* looming on the horizon, it appears Codemasters is keen to keep ahead of the pack by releasing some new details and screens on its next-gen racer *Colin McRae: DIRT*.

A top talking point is not the roaring engines of the 40-plus officially licensed cars, but its impressive new game engine, known as the Neon; a piece of kit that apparently allows for much greater and more realistic representations of cars and environments, as well as the damage you can cause to both. If you're wondering exactly what you'll be shredding mud with, there seems to be quite some choice, spanning 12 car classes including 2WD, 4WD and a selection of prototype machines.

With Mr McRae trying to make a good impression on a new audience, the development team is leaving no detail to chance, even elements like the wind are said to play a big part in proceedings. While wind might not sound like too much of an issue, once you're engaged in a hill climb with a track full of other racers, mud splattering on the windscreen is just one more element to challenge you. We're sure there'll be online missions too, but we'll be bring you more information in the coming months.

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The Next3 year

Ahhh, the New Year is here and as we all look forward to a bleakly frugal few months and tiresome Ryvita-based diets, console yourself with the knowledge that the coming months are set to be the most exciting in videogame history. Sure, that sounds like the kind of empty rhetoric you'll see at the start of a thousand forward-looking features around this time of year, but we really mean it. Grab a hold of the following eleven pages and have a little rifle through. Feel that excitement, that enthusiasm, and that anticipation? We certainly can. There are, of course, a few lights shining higher than others, but each and every projected happening we've selected is something that will incite either furious debate, overwhelming excitement or pure, simple gaming joy. Guaranteed. The PS3 has been out in the States and Japan for mere weeks, yet already we're getting an avalanche of updates, downloads, demos, announcements and, most importantly, games – it's pretty clear to see that despite a little bad press of late, Sony's commitment to the PlayStation 3 is steadfast. It's going to be a good year friends, so kick back, crack open another packet of low-fat, low-salt, high-fibre snack food and enjoy. Forget the destination, and enjoy the journey...

PS3 LAUNCH

THE DAWN OF A NEW AGE

Okay, so what if the PS3's been out in Japan and the States for a full four months before we see it on our shores? What we're getting is something immeasurably superior to their launches. It may be frustrating to have played third fiddle in the global Sony orchestra for so long, but Europe's time is very much now. With the benefit of a £40 million marketing budget, be sure that the European launch will be one of the most successful ever. The only foreseeable problem will be a lack of units in March, and again, with the benefit of four months of preparation time, Sony is making sure there are at least enough to cover the initial spurt of demand. However, suffer no delusions, they'll be tricky to get a hold of, and there are even some dissenters mumbling that the PS3 won't be coming to these shores until September at least, but all indicators, namely publisher backing, release dates, and the clear escalation of the marketing steamroller point toward a healthy March release. We've been covering the news and issues surrounding the machine for over half a year now. We've got a few PlayStation 3s in the office and we're regularly online, slaughtering our overseas buddies, so you could, perhaps, be forgiven for thinking that we might be a little jaded by now. We're not though, and we can safely say, with absolute consensus that the launch of the PS3 is the most significant happening in gaming history.

We've been aware of the specs for some time now, but what we'll be getting in the box is a true next-gen console with HDTV, Blu-ray and a future-proofed half decade in front of you. If, on launch day, you manage to get hold of one then, savour the moment – you won't have one like it until the PS4.

JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC

FOOTY ON THE PS3

PES VERSUS FIFA. AGAIN

We've had a decade's worth of the struggle for dominance between *FIFA* and *Pro Evo*, or various iterations of it, and there's little more to say about it coming to PS3 except for "Hurrah!", given the complete lack of a footy game until the tail-end of last year. Come October, though, we can all expect the same kind of hoo-ha that surrounds the yearly glut of football titles. While we've always been supporters of *Pro Evo*, it's fair to say that when they take the battle to the PlayStation 3, there will be little between the two. Of course, you can't rule out the possibility that *World Tour Soccer* might outdo both of them, as the lucrative soccer market has long been a target for Sony. However, with its *This Is Football* heritage, we'd have to bet against it dominating the market. We haven't heard a thing about any of these titles as yet, but rest assured you'll get the rundown around issue 15.

JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC

VIRTUA FIGHTER 5

AIIIYYYYE-YAAAA!

Any later than June and the hardcore fighter fanboys will have lost interest in what must be deemed the most in-depth fighter ever created. While we've seen plenty of *Virtua Fighter 5*, and had a good ol' mince around with it, we're still not sure if it'll appeal to the masses as much as previous titles. Perhaps these kind of purist beat-'em-ups have had their day. We'll find out soon enough though, as some sources list *VF5* as a launch title.

JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC

SMACKDOWN

GRAPPLING WITH THE PS3

Unlike *Virtua Fighter* or *FIFA*, *Smackdown!* has never had much competition. Sure, the latest version didn't receive too much critical acclaim, what with its slightly ropey control mechanic, but with the popularity of sports entertainment comes a huge boost in sales of THQ's monster grappler. Either way, *Smackdown!* will endure until the end of time.

JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC

PSP 2

NEXT-GEN PSP

The next version of the PSP is something we'll only find out about when Sony are good and ready, but you can guarantee, based on past form, that the PSP will receive a hardware reworking at some point this year. What exactly we'll see of the machine this year is a matter for internet rumour and speculation, but we can be fairly sure that the new PSP will include flash memory, a camera, a bigger screen and a slimmed-down casing. Other possibilities could include mobile phone technology, the removal of the UMD slot and a seriously improved battery.

E3 '07
US SHOW SHRINKS

JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC

After twelve years, the Electronic Entertainment Expo is downsizing. Not wanting to compete with other shows around the world, this year's E3 will be a far more intimate affair, focusing on smaller, more 'effective' press events. With the show becoming ever more commercial over the years, it makes sense for the next E3 to be a comparatively understated, as its main purpose – to promote the cause of videogames as it were – has been served. With TGS, CDG, Microsoft's X conferences, Leipzig and EIEF all serving as outlets for announcements and media 'get togethers', the life of E3 as it once was has always been doomed. Enter the new-look E3 that will comprise of two events: one for the public and one for the reputable press. We've been promised (for the second time) that the booth babes are a thing of the past though, so it may not hold the interest of the more casual gamer and, as a sad side-note, will see many a sexy showgirl destitute this summer.

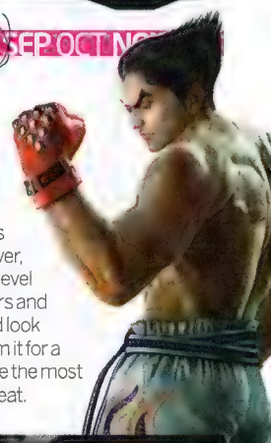
JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC

NEXT3 VERSUS THE WORLD
CHALLENGE US!

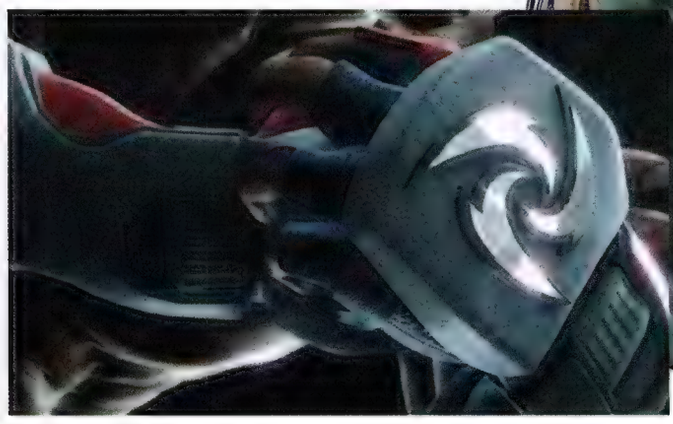
Throughout the year, you'll be able to challenge us is a series of online events, clan meets and good old-fashioned tournaments. Whether it's a team deathmatch against you lousy alien-loving scum on *Resistance*, or taking us on one-on-one at *Fight Night*, you're guaranteed a healthy serving of your own ass on a plate. See, we're already getting into the spirit of online gaming, and none of you have even challenged us yet. We'll be having special events as well, including plenty of surprises, not to mention prizes on offer, too.

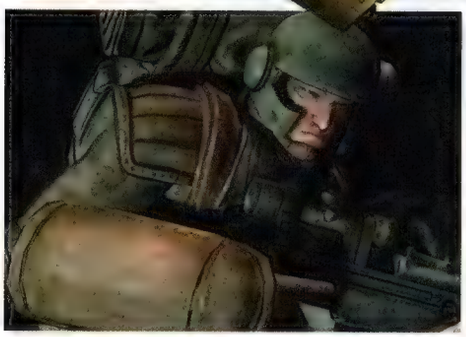
JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV

TEKKEN 6
MISHIMA FAMILY DOMESTICS GET EVEN MORE MENTAL



It may not be up there with *Virtua Fighter* in terms of depth (although that's still debatable for us) but it stands for many as the epitome of the 3D fighting genre. However, much like *Virtua Fighter*, we remain concerned that the level of innovation will be limited to a handful of new characters and some destructible environments. If this is the case, we'd look sternly on the beat-'em-up and probably shy away from it for a good few years. On the other hand, should Namco make the most of the next-gen opportunities, we could be in for a real treat.





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WARHAWK

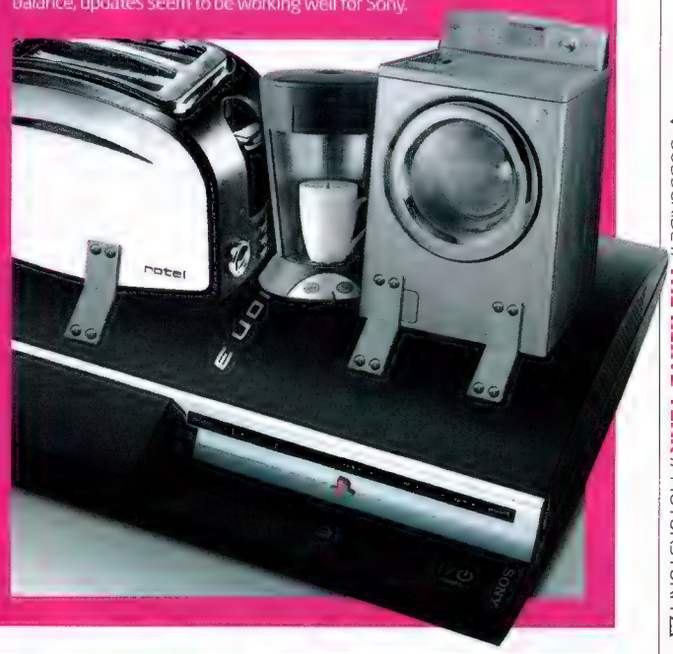
TILT CONTROL AT ITS BEST

The original *Warhawk* on PSone may have been a title limited by the console, but it was still pretty good fun. What this iteration brings to the table is a mixed bag of absolutely amazing flying sections as well as some rather ropey-looking on-foot gameplay. We've been assured, however, that these seemingly out-of-place segments complement the aerial combat, allowing you to take the battle anywhere by having almost-unlimited landing zones. *Warhawk* could well be the title to demonstrate the PS3's capability for immense environments and epic battles, and from what we've seen, despite the uneasy on-foot bits, it could be the best flight sim ever.

FIRMWARE UPDATES

SYSTEM SOFTWARE GETS US HARD

The range of functions available to PlayStation 3 owners will only increase as time goes by including Location Free, a more streamlined XMB and video-grabbing technology. Some may be a little worried by the fact that such a future-proofed machine needs so many updates, but any dissenters should look to how well Sony has kept the PSP up-to-date, gradually adding things like Location Free technology, Flash players and RSS feeds with its regular updates. Sure, a major part of the Firmware updates were security, irritating the homebrew crowd no end, but on balance, updates seem to be working well for Sony.

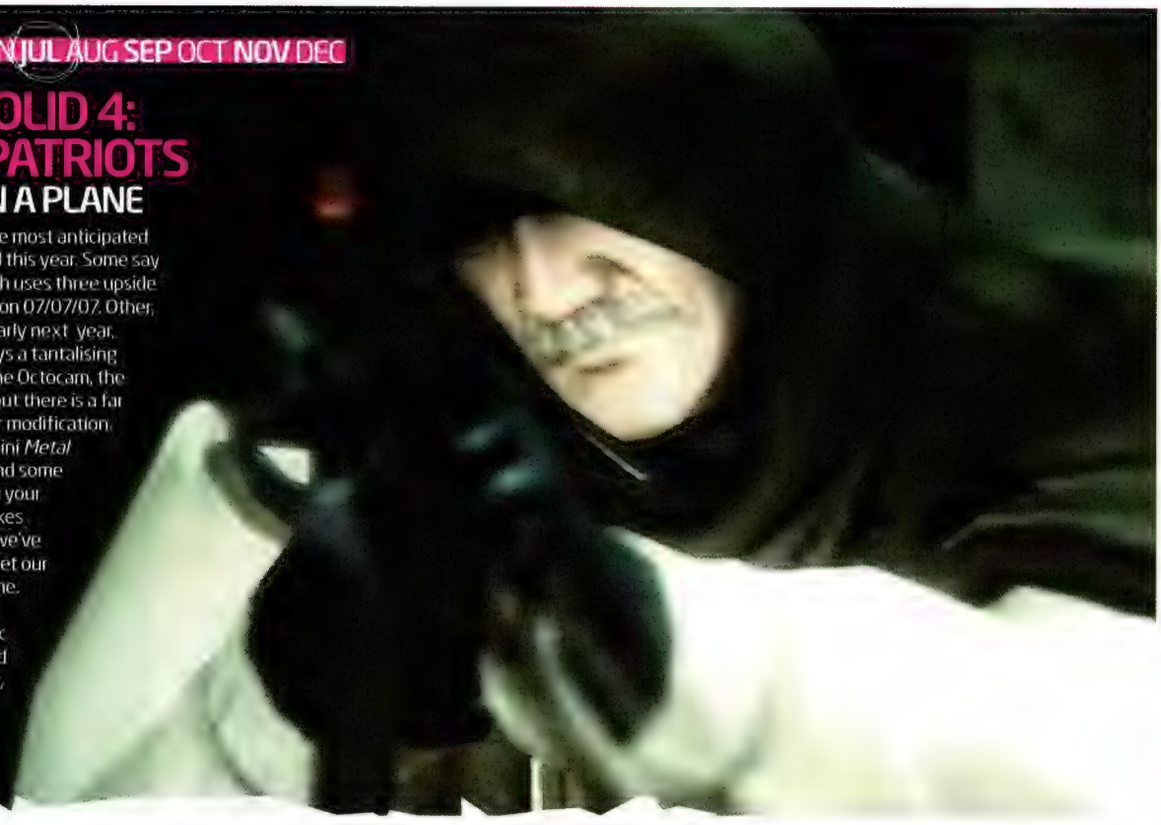


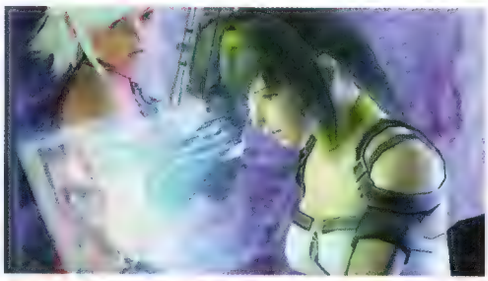
JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC

METAL GEAR SOLID 4: GUNS OF THE PATRIOTS

SNAKES, BUT NOT ON A PLANE

Metal Gear Solid will undoubtedly be the most anticipated game of this year. If indeed it's released this year. Some say the hint is in the most recent logo, which uses three upside down sevens, indicating a release date on 07/07/07. Other, more sensible folk are holding out for early next year, as the wait for *Metal Gear* titles is always a tantalising one. New this time around is not only the Octocam, the ever-changing camo suit you're given, but there is a far greater emphasis on weapons and their modification. In addition to numerous old friends, a mini *Metal Gear* that's complete with video feed and some offensive capacity accompanies you on your missions which Hideo has exclaimed takes influence from *Bond* films. Everything we've seen from Kojima's studio so far has whet our collective appetite unlike any other game. It may not be entirely revolutionary, as there will be many aspects of the classic stealth-'em-up that won't have changed since the PSone, but be absolutely sure, beyond anything else, *Guns Of The Patriots* will be amazing.





JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC

EYETOY 2

THE EYES HAVE IT

The original *EyeToy* may not have been anything more than a novelty, but the *EyeToy 2* actually puts you in the game, quite unlike any other type of motion-sensing equipment. There are very few specifics on it, and some of the games set for release with the hardware aren't looking like the best we've ever seen, but the 3D mapping technology makes for a pretty exciting prospect.

JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC

ALONE IN THE DARK: NEAR DEATH INVESTIGATION

OI, MATE, GOT A LIGHT?

Alone In The Dark has changed a great deal since the origin of the series, but it's with this iteration that the franchise becomes truly triple-A. What really interests us is the beauty of the in-game visuals. Not only does the whole thing have the feel of a tense thriller, but the astounding animation and environments are what – if they turn out to be anything like the early screens – could well be the very first real next-gen survival horror.

JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC

BLU-RAY LAUNCH

MEDIA STORAGE WARS HOT UP

Sony's past history with storage media isn't exactly sparking, but with Blu-ray, we reckon it's backed a winner this time. Sure, recent reports have suggested HD-DVD is the way forward, and with it being a good deal easier to produce than Sony's proprietary medium, there's stiff competition. That said, there's still the fact that Blu-ray is bigger. Bigger means more, and more means better. Simple. We've had a few movie sit-ins with our HDTV, HDMI cable, pizza and Blu-ray films so far, and the shift in quality from standard DVD is incredible. This is the future folks.

JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC

GTA IV

BIGGEST GAME EVER MADE?

Without a doubt *GTA IV* (whatever the suffix) will be the biggest videogame ever. We have to admit, we know very little about it; however, we can guarantee that it'll set the world alight with its trademark mix of sandbox adventure and controversial themes. With each instalment in the series receiving massive critical acclaim, and the gameplay becoming deeper and deeper, it's only a matter of time until it surpasses real life in terms of scope and intricacy. Should *GTA* feature an online competitive mode, we could very well see the end of videogaming as we know it, as traditional ideas about what a videogame should be are thrown out the proverbial window. It'll keep you busy, we reckon, for approximately the lifespan of the PS3, so without having seen or heard anything about it, we can safely say that you need it, 10/10.

JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC

AFFORDABLE HDTV

THE DEFINING MOMENT

Currently ranging from around £300 to £10,000, HDTV is at the tail end of the early adopter phase. Come June though, we reckon it'll be very much the norm, with the supermarkets offering HD deals in a pile-it-high-sell-it-cheap fashion. Once that gets going there will be no stopping the drastic reduction in price and within the year, pretty much every TV will be supporting 1080p. This means, of course, that developers will be throwing out their games in glorious high def as well. Bonus.

JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC

ASSASSIN'S CREED

EVERYTHING IS TRUE...

What stuck out as the best of last year's E3 showing hasn't seen much publicity of late, but with an already impressive-looking game and pretty much a whole year left in development, Ubisoft's Montreal Studio has the potential to create one of the biggest games of all time. We'll be using the phrase 'social stealth' a lot more in the future, but it's this mechanic that will revolutionise the stealth genre – and you can bet on that. With successes like the *Prince Of Persia* series to work from, we're betting that Ubisoft will rake it in with this murder-'em-up.

JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC

BURNOUT 5

BURN, BABY BURN

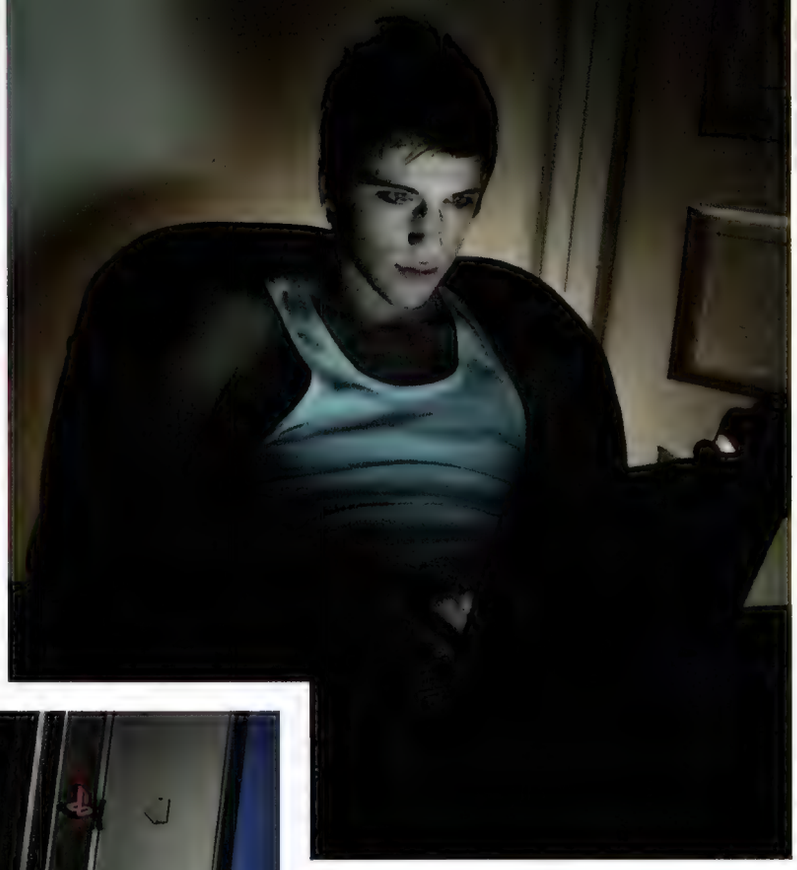
Burnout has remained at the top of its game for some years now, but how will it fare on the next generation of consoles? Will the obligatory hike in graphics be enough to keep it at the top of its game? If we're brutally honest we don't really know. However, what we do know, is that *Burnout 5* crashes will be the best you've ever seen. Trudat.

JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC

DEVIL MAY CRY 4

DANTE'S FOURTH RING OF HELL

Okay, okay, so it doesn't feature Dante as the lead character, but for all intents and purposes, it might as well do. With a few new mechanics, like the Devil Hand and Throttle Sword, adding to the standard slick combat, we're sure this iteration will build on the awesome groundwork laid down by *DMC 3* and deliver something that, while not entirely next-gen perhaps, will keep the twitch hungry hack-'n'-slash combo freaks happy for some time.



JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC

BACK TO BED
BEDROOM DEVELOPMENT RETURNS

The second the PS3 hits shelves there will be folk hacking and homebrewing the hell out of it. If the PSP is anything to go by we'll have a whole bunch of budget homebrew to look forward to, along with the standard Sony grumbling. But when the Linux OS hits, bedroom developers will be able to get hold of a package to start creating games and applications for the system. How many of these will find their way on to our consoles is a question only time will answer, but with titles like *flOw* already out there, it won't be long until we start seeing stunners emerging from the bedroom scene. We hope.

JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC

NEW PLAYSTATION 3 ANNOUNCED
PS3.1

While we're all happily getting to grips with the launch, Sony is working on downsizing the PS3. Expect an announcement late this year about a shrunken version of the world's most powerful games conso e. Much like the PSone and PS2 saw, the less meaty version will simply be a physically smaller, but considerably sexier piece of electronics – if that's possible.

JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC

HALF-LIFE COLLECTION ON PS3
GET A (HALF) LIFE

While *Half Life: Episode 2* has been put back considerably further than we would like, its appearance on the PlayStation 3 will be a joy to thousands of console gamers who may have missed the adventures of Gordon Freeman in the past. What you're getting with this version is not only *Half Life2* and *Episode One* and *Two*, and *Counter-Strike* but *Portal*, a FPS puzzler and the amazing-looking *Team Fortress 2*, a title that will rule the online roost for some time. Given Valve's penchant for episodic content, future downloadable updates for the series should be pretty frequent, making it one of the best value purchases ever.

NEW FRANCHISES
NEW FOR 2007

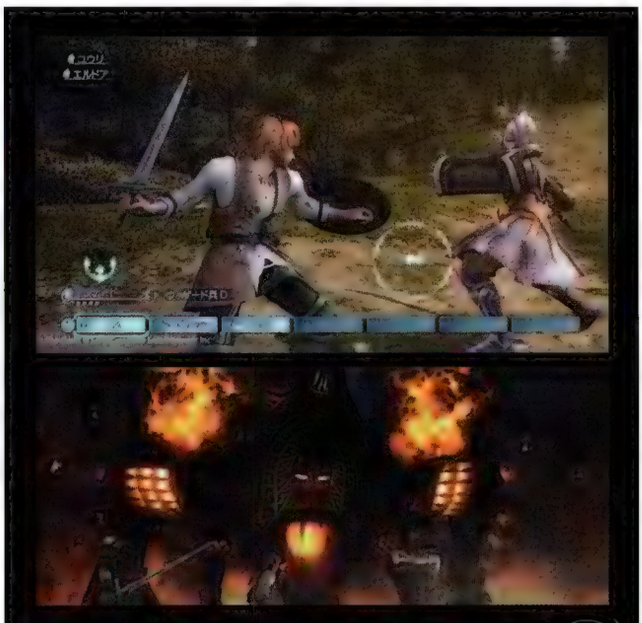
The amount of new franchises coming to the PS3 is unprecedented in its scale, encompassing buckets of new ideas, concepts and characters. Think about it, the games you'll be buying on Sony's new console will be brand new. *Assassin's Creed* will most likely be the biggest of the bunch, but we've got *Lair*'s multifaceted aerial combat, *L.A. Noir*'s gritty atmos, and *Eye Of Judgement*'s tabletop card battling to look forward to, as well as action/adventure titles like *Harker*, *Dark Sector* and the truly awesome looking *Army Of Two*.

What these games offer is a chance to move away from the generic nature of many franchises built up over the lifespan of the previous two Sony consoles. How many of these will stamp their mark on the PS3 is debatable, as they're being created with the 360 in mind as well, but once the development of games diverges to take account of the two system's differing abilities, we'll start to see some truly outstanding new IPs coming our, and only our, way.

JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN JUL AUG **SEP** OCT NOV DEC

TOKYO GAME SHOW
HOUSE OF THE RISING FUN

Given E3's decreased prominence in the world of videogame expos, TGS will be taking a front seat this year with what will surely be the Japanese expo's biggest ever showing. *Metal Gear Solid* will be taking centre stage with playable code as well as *Final Fantasy XIII* and *Killzone*, all, it's worth noting, PS3 exclusives. It's always been a show for the public, and TGS '07 will be playing host to over 250,000 gamers from around the world. Of course it's famed for revealing new titles, so we can only imagine what joys we'll have to cover come September.



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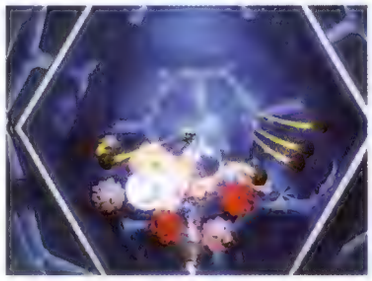
WHITE KNIGHT STORY
GOOD KNIGHT SWEETHEART

This RPG promises to be something of a departure from Sony's existing stable of titles. Set to become a huge franchise, this massive adventure is based around a young warrior who has the ability to transform himself into a giant shiny Knight. The most interesting aspect of *White Knight Story* is the combat, which, if you've seen the trailer, looks to be a good deal more complex than any other RPG.

JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC

FFXIII PLAYABLE CODE
UNLUCKY FOR SOME?

Some of you won't understand the draw of this game, indeed we argued fiercely over whether or not the appearance of playable code was worthy of citing as one of our main points of interest for this year. However, for others, *FFXIII* could result in the end of their real life as they tumble into the engrossing world of *Final Fantasy*. What's intriguing to us is just how impressive Square Enix's new White engine will be, as the in-game graphics are purportedly indistinguishable from the cut-scenes. How will online feature? Which character is taking the lead? Will it revert back to a more traditional, pre-*FFXII* style? These are all questions that we'll find out answers to at this year's E3 and TGS.



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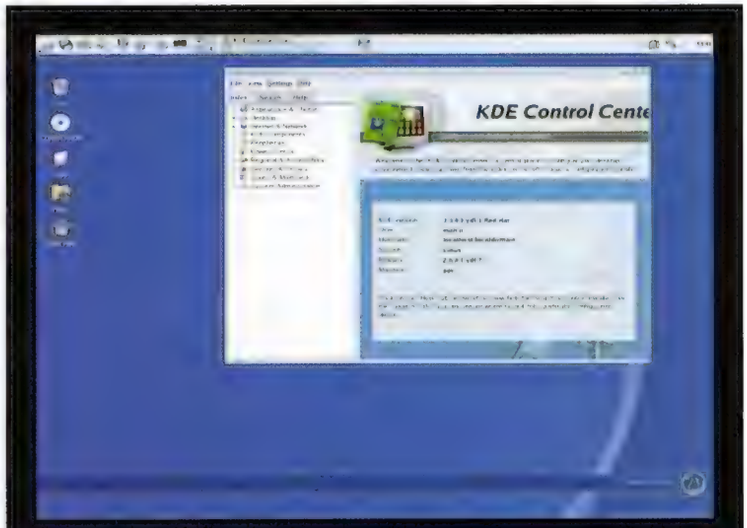
ELECTRONIC DISTRIBUTION INITIATIVE
PLAYSTATION STORE ON DAY ONE

Having a PlayStation shop online from day one means you'll be able to download a bunch of stuff stra ght out of the box. First impressions of the store are positive from our point of view, with none other than *Gran Turismo HD* – one of the most eagerly awaited racers – making an early appearance in the download l ne-up, it's clear to see that Sony is committed to making their online network a place bustling with goodies, extras and freebees. If the US and Japanese sites are anything to go by, the expansion in Europe will be astronomica – yet another good thing about the de ay. However, the price is a surpr s ng aspect of the store; everything, stateside at least, is incred bly good value. We are hoping that this translates to the European market, because we're cheap gits.



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LINUX COMES TO PS3
YELLOW-BELLIED DAWG!

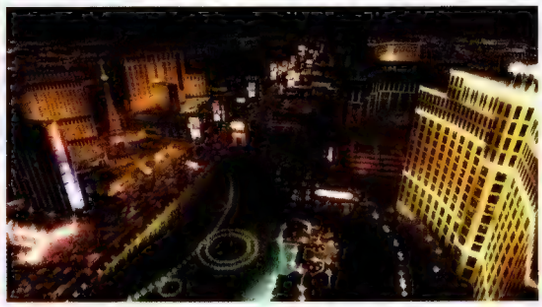
The news that Linux's Yellow Dog 5.0 OS is available for the PS3 may not bother many of you, but with this new open source operating system, the PS3 becomes a competitor to many lower-grade PCs on the market. The applications available to PS3 owners with Yellow Dog are varied, turning the PlayStation 3 into the only thing you need in your entertainment centre. These applications include an open source Software Development Kit, giving coders the opportunity to really explore the Cell Broadband Engine, a contact manager and organiser, stickies, word processor, Virtual Network Computing, allowing you to view and interact with any computer on the internet, and a batch of Gnome games, some of the most gratifying and addictive desktop titles around to name but a few of the 2000+ appliances.

JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC

HEAVENLY SWORD

COVER YOUR NUTS, NARIKO'S COMING

Heavenly Sword will be an absolutely massive title on the PS3. Possibly the biggest game of the year. It's been touted as '*God Of War* with a chick', but it's so much more than that. While the comparisons with one of the best games on the PS2 are no doubt flattering, developer Ninja Theory is keen to point out that the similarities are only in that both are slick combat-based titles. The epic storyline and ridiculously over-the-top battles are something we can all appreciate; and along with massively destructible environments and simple, fluid controls, *Heavenly Sword* is the kind of game that will, shortly after its release, have gamers clamouring for a sequel. While little about it seems particularly innovative, the pure, unadulterated joy of battering the hell out of hoards and hoards of loinclothed gladiators is fun. Bloody good fun.



NEXT-GEN UPDATES

SHINIER GRAPHICS, ANYONE?

Sure, we've been ranting on about the new IPs and how the next generation should be, but the biggest sellers will be those franchises that have made it big on the PS2. To be fair, we haven't seen anything apart from shiner graphics from the games that have appeared so far, but sometimes that's all you need. Take *Virtua Tennis 3*, for example. One hundred per cent *this generation*, but horrendously playable nonetheless. There will be others that offer little extra past the obligatory hike in visuals, most notably the sports titles out there, but with franchises like *Prince Of Persia*, *Rainbow Six*, *Def Jam* and *Medal Of Honor*, the opportunity is there to make more of the success built up over the life of the PS2. Whether or not that opportunity is taken is a different matter. We can but hope.

JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC

PS4 ANNOUNCED (OR AT THE VERY LEAST, RUMOURED)

RUMOUR MILL GETS GOING

By the end of the year, expect to be hearing plenty of rumours about the PS4. There have already been a few early speculations regarding what kind of electronics, functions and software will be used on the system, but in reality the only thing we have to go on is Ken Kutaragi's assertion that by the time the PS4 hits shelves – somewhere over half a decade away – disc storage medium will be dead and buried, suggesting Sony sees the way forward being microtransactions and downloads.

So, there we have it. This year's happenings in twelve easy pages. Sure, some of our predictions, in traditional videogame form, may not come to fruition this year, but rest assured we've all got a stunning twelve months ahead. Don't get us wrong, you're in for some disappointments along with the captivating array of top class titles and other exciting happenings in the world of PS3, but it's guaranteed to be an eventful one. Cheers folks, and here's to 2007.

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- Unbiased professional opinions
- The UK's biggest videogame magazine
- Over 60 pages of the latest previews and reviews
- Massive section dedicated to Retro games every month

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next3 view

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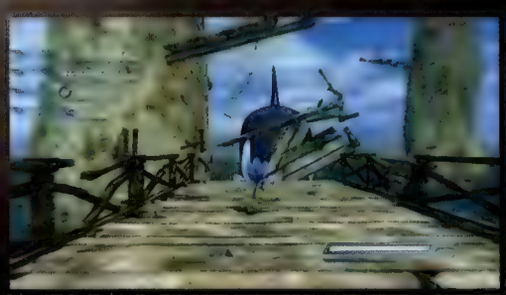

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"Make your standard definition TV-owning mates gasp in awe and then beg for a go"

IMPORT REVIEW
JAPANESE EDITION

MOTORSTORM

Now this is next gen, and it's truly amazing

PS3 INFORM

Publisher Sony
Developer Evolution Studios
Release Date Out now (Japan)
Price £/import
Players 1
Genre Racing
Supports 720p, Dolby Digital
Age Rating 10+
Website www.motorstorm.com
Demo Yes

THERE are a lot of haters in the world. You know the ones; even before the PS3's release they ran their mouths how it wasn't capable of the graphics being showcased in demos or videos, and that when we all see what it can actually do, we'll be left looking like fools. Did they have a point? In a way, we guess they did. Too often in this industry of ours companies use full motion video or CGI footage and try to pass it off as what you'll see in-game. It's a clever marketing ploy to make us all go loopy for a new title, but it's also mean – damn mean. There's always one poor chump who falls in love with the visuals they see and decides, based on that, they'll do whatever it takes to get their hands on the game; how our heart goes out to them. Hell, some adverts try to make us believe that what we're seeing is a game's graphics, until the tiny disclaimer at its conclusion where it informs us, 'footage shown is not in game' – the scoundrels.

However, as a new and more powerful era rises, this soon may become a dying trend. Cast your minds back two years ago to E3 2005. Hopefully most of you will remember Sony's video of *MotorStorm*. Never before had the world seen a game that looked as this one did. At a push, you could have even convinced someone that what they were witnessing was an actual race; it looked *that* good. Of course, within moments those same haters were back, ready to wax lyrical in the same fashion as before. Grab your time remote and push the fast forward button until we get to last year's E3. Again *MotorStorm* was present, and again it wowed audiences with its ridiculously pretty and realistic visuals. Could this be the title to break years of

"MotorStorm may be the best looking videogame in history"

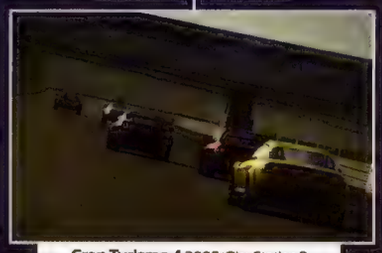
Gaming Family Tree

Destruction Derby 1995//PlayStation

ATV Offroad Fury 2001//PlayStation 2

Colin McRae Rally 1998//PlayStation

WipEout 1995//PlayStation



Gran Turismo 4 2005//PlayStation 2

Burnout: Revenge 2005//PlayStation 2

MotorStorm PS3 2007

If you don't have the guts, then you're not going to win. Taking on a big rig in a motorbike is just the start...

Even at breathtaking speeds, there's always time to have a little glance over at your rivals.

CONTINUATION //

tradition and back up its absurd graphic style? You bet your ass it could.

It would be crazy of us if we started this review without talking about how great *MotorStorm* looks. Feel free to object, but it may be the best-looking videogame in history – now that's a statement. We're sure you've all seen videos, and maybe some of you have been lucky enough to download the demo from the PS Network, but it can't prepare you for the shock your jaw will receive when it smashes down into the floor after laying your eyes on the game for the first time. Whether it's the incredible draw distance, amazing textures, realistic particle effects or just the overall wow factor, nothing even comes close to matching its graphical standard. Amazingly, they even seem to improve the more time you spend with it. It's a common trend when playing through a game for your eyes to get used to what's on offer, no matter how impressive it may be. *MotorStorm*, on the other hand, refuses to let up, and changing the view to in-car will leave you lost for words; it looks so good you'll need to keep telling yourself it is just a videogame. Alas, for some bizarre reason, Evolution Studios decided to scrap this when you're in a motorbike or buggy, replacing it instead with an extreme close-up right behind the driver. Not only is it nowhere near as extraordinary, but also makes steering near impossible (though the default third-person camera works just fine, so you can always stick to that).

In addition to the level of visuals continually pushing the boundaries, technically it's a masterpiece as well. The game's physics are simply unbelievable. Let's say you're driving a car and are literally inches behind an eight wheel lorry. It's swerving left and right, doing its all to stop you passing. You approach a bend you've soared around dozens of times and are confident you can attack it with pinpoint accuracy. But rather than swinging round the curve with grace, your wheel seems to get stuck and you smash into a wall – you've just been *MotorStorm*ed. The technology, which can only be attributed to the power of the PS3, is so advanced that even the grooves and markings in the mud will affect your vehicle... just as they would in real life. This doesn't end here, either. Your choice of car, truck, buggy or bike can drastically change the outcome of a race, due to the layout of each course. You may not appreciate the slow and sluggish nature of a big rig (think massive lorry) but when you're struggling to nip through patches of deep, restrictive mud in your motorbike, you'd give your right arm to hop in one. Conversely, finding a high path with minimal dirt will result in your motorbike reacting like a bullet from a gun, while a big rig will teeter as if it was on a tightrope.

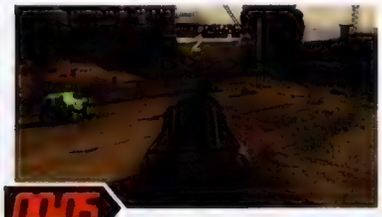
The unique feel that each vehicle manages to possess not only requires you to constantly change your approach, but – due to the fact some races have to be done with specific vehicles – also means some contests will be rather difficult, depending on what your preferred choice is. This element becomes *MotorStorm*'s backbone, and the selection

FIRST LEVEL TIMEWATCH

The shock of the new - different surfaces, multiple paths and more!

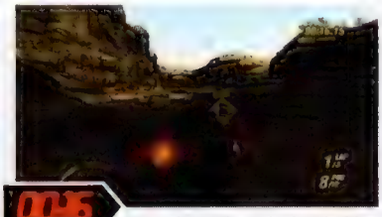
Coyote Rage is quite deceptive. It takes on the appearance of a nice, simple way to help ease you into the game, when in fact it is actually an intense, heart-stopping war zone where aggression and passion are an absolute must.

00:01 Take a deep breath because the videogame racing world as you know it is about to change. Various types of vehicles rev their engines, and they all want victory.

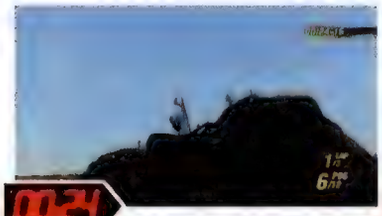


00:05 If you're smart, your right finger will be firmly pressed on R2. As soon as the countdown is over, the carnage will begin, and even a second's delay could change the potential outcome.

00:07 As you approach the first major corner of the course, it's a matter of ploughing through your challengers with little remorse and attacking the race with confidence.

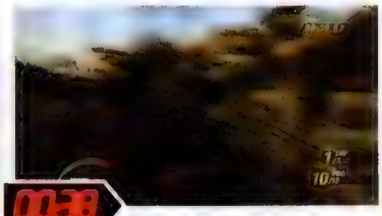


00:16 Almost instantly you're faced with your first choice of route; you can take the high road on the left, the muddy trail down the middle, or the treacherous path to the right.

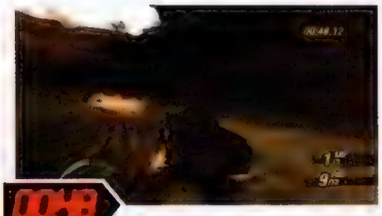


00:24 As is to be expected, a hidden bump sends your vehicle into the air and how you land will have a profound effect on where you finish; you really want to land well.

00:28 If you do indeed touch back down safely, you may as well have a go with the boost. Fire rockets out from your exhaust and the reaction may catch you off-guard.

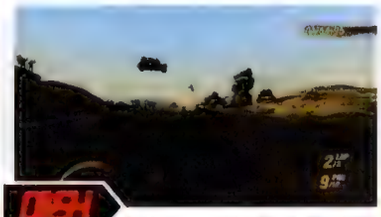


00:38 As multiple vehicles are tearing up the track, the ground has become very muddy. Being tenth isn't going to help either as nine cars have already softened the soil - it's gonna be tough.



00:48 The penultimate bend of the first lap and you've managed to reach ninth place. But it still isn't good enough, and the combo of mud and your rival's dust will slow you down even more.

01:38 A big rig blocks your path, but with your engine on the verge of overheating, boosting is out of the question. It's best to try to stay to one side, or you could get caught up in its tyre grooves.



01:54 As the competition heats up, other racers push their personal ride too far allowing you to enjoy a fireworks display and the sight of their chassis flying off into the air.

02:37 You'll probably overuse your boost due to your inexperience with it, then you will discover on the third lap that you've run out of juice. There's still a lot for you to learn...

02:54 Sixth place isn't bad considering, but *MotorStorm* only rewards drivers who can fight their way into third place. Still, at least you can blow up your truck as you cross the finish line.

SUMMARY: SLICK LEVEL DESIGN AND A GREAT INTRODUCTION INTO WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM LATER STAGES

for each is notable. Obviously you have your main categories: big rig, rally car, truck, buggy, motorbike, ATV and mud plugger, but thanks to the variety on offer you'll have access to numerous vehicles within each group tnat you can try to master. It's here the game gets its real depth, and as they all feel so different you never know what to expect; it's downright genius. You may dominate a race in a rally car, but attempting the same track in a big rig, for example, is such a different beast that the course takes on a completely new feel. Even the opening track, Coyote Rage, which at its most basic is a circle, can't be approached with just one strategy in mind. Instead, it's a matter of having a number of tactical blueprints etched into your mind and accessing them when needs be; even then you'll have to rely on your instincts if you want to stay within the medals.

Somehow, *MotorStorm* continues to impress. As you may have gathered, there's not a solitary set route for you to whiz round on each course; far from it. All tracks have multiple paths, and the odds of driving around the same section each time are minimal. It's absolutely fantastic and it'll take a good while before you figure out which way is quickest, and yet a misjudged turn can still result in you having to rethink your path. Eventually though, the desert scene does get slightly tiresome and it's likely you'll start to crave some concrete and greenery. It's an off-road racer set in the desert, so anything other than this would seem out of place, but due to sand being a particularly bland colour (damn sand) it struggles to remain interesting during long periods of play. Luckily, the course design is of such a high standard it manages to retain the majority of its charm throughout.

"It'll take you a good while before you figure out which way is quickest"

To be honest, even if the idea behind the single-player had been poorly executed, *MotorStorm* would have still deserved high praise, but like the game on the whole it just doesn't let up. Okay, so it's a fairly basic concept; you're a driver who attends racing festivals of sorts, and you have to get your grubby paws on a ticket before you can enter them. Obviously tickets are thrust in your direction from the off, but to get more you will have to be successful. It's kept interesting because each ticket is completely unique. A few may require you to complete numerous races, others will force you to drive a buggy while everyone else is in a big rig, or you may just have to duke it out in your run-of-the-mill automobile. It's a nice way to make a pretty normal championship mode seem slightly different, and it works perfectly. Although the main aim is to finish within the top three, Evolution has also employed a points system, allowing those who so desire a reason to return

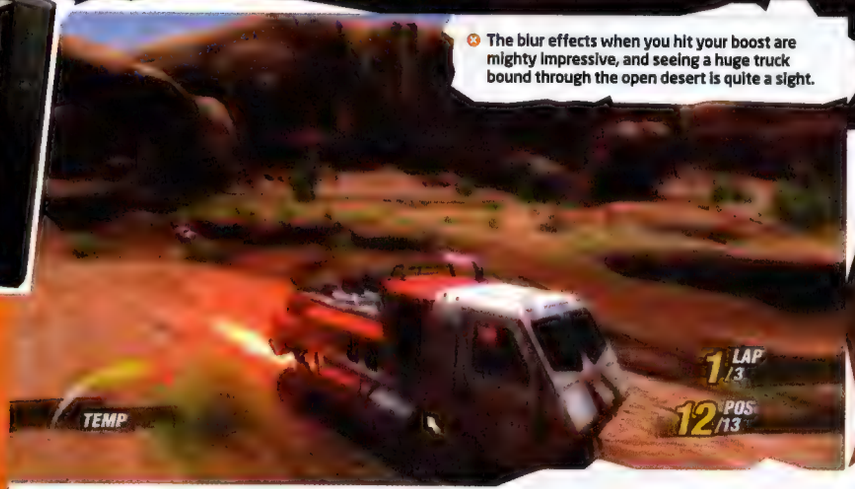
Profile

ROCKING

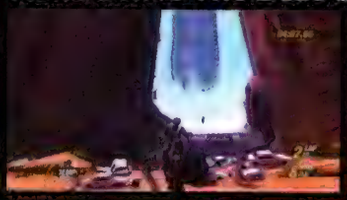
Slaughter
Count the different vehicles you can see in this screenshot - quite immense isn't it? Whenever you have a motorbike and a big rig literally a few feet from each other, there's no way either will get to the end without a few dents (well, the big rig might...).

nextGen
What defines this game as a 'Next-Gen' PlayStation 3 title?

The blur effects when you hit your boost are mighty impressive, and seeing a huge truck bound through the open desert is quite a sight.



Best Looking Game... Ever! Once Again!
It's a rather generic reason, but how could we not mention the graphics again? Without doubt it's the prettiest game on the PS3 and surely will become the title to show your friends what your new juggernaut can do.

Next-Gen Is The Best Gen

Finally proof that next-gen is one bad mother; the technology showcased in *MotorStorm* is unrivalled. Whether it's the epic draw distance, the unrivalled particle effects or the solid physics engine, it's all rather impressive.

It's Thinking. About Breaking You

Words can't do it justice, but your computer-controlled opponents are extremely intelligent. Just as you can use a courses' design to your advantage, so can they, and they're certainly not scared to throw their weight around.

CONTINUATION//
to a ticket in the hope of walking away with the highest number of points possible.

As always, things will get harder the further you progress, and the AI really becomes a pain (in a good way) a few hours in. Each Festival ticket is divided up into levels, and as soon as you hit level three, you'd have to be blind not to notice the change. The sheer carnage that takes place on screen is almost scary. Rival vehicles will fly over the top of you, and you'd be a fool to think that some won't try and crush your vehicle. Much like the closing scene in a dramatic action movie, you'll be hurtling left and right to ensure your own well-being. Some may argue that this is nothing more than a novelty, but it really strengthens the immersive nature of the game; it'll put you on edge and your pumping heart will let you know that you're desperate not to lose, but don't expect your opponents to cut you any slack. They may start off harmless, but once they determine you to be somewhat of a threat they go nuts. They'll ram into you, hoping to push you off the track, trap you between two vehicles so you can't move and even giving them the slightest opening will result in parts of your vehicle flying off – and here lies another of *MotorStorm*'s beautiful traits. You'll have to pull off the perfect lap if you want to keep your car in pristine condition, and there's no way you'll be able to constantly achieve this. Much like the legendary *Burnout* series, if you crash your vehicle you'll be treated to a small slow-motion cut-scene of it and the driver being blown to smithereens. As you bash and crash your way through the desert, you'll even be able to see the severe damage that it's sustained. Expect to lose bits of your bodywork, smash in your lights and generally make a real mess. Again, the physics are mind boggling and there's as much enjoyment in watching your car explode as there is in going for gold; witnessing your vehicle react differently and exactly the way it should is hard to take your eyes off of, and *MotorStorm* has really set the bar that all racing games after it have to follow (including *Burnout*).

Unfortunately, it's not all roses, and as necessary as the pile-ups are, we can't help but feel a little disappointed and upset with how unforgiving they can be at times. We understand why we end up in pieces after careering headfirst into a wall, but why does the slightest clip of the tires result in a similar experience? It's not enough to hamper proceedings to an alarming degree, but it's frustrating to lose ground on your opponents because you accidentally drove over a little rock – even at speeds that border on insanity it can feel slightly daft to say the least. Granted this may just be due to our inexperience

Of note
A big red hand may mean stop, but it's always your choice which way to go.
Of note
Watching the mud fly off from the ground on to the screen is inspiring.
LAP

Warfare

In many ways, *MotorStorm* is nothing more than an out-an-out war. Vehicles smash into each other in the hope of ending their enemy and more often than not you've got to just put your foot down and smash into everything. Conversely, at times even strength of character isn't really enough, as enemies will unite to eradicate a greater enemy; namely you.

involving actual crashes, but in terms of a videogame it can be quite trying.

Thankfully, irrespective of how much damage you cause it doesn't impinge on the handling at all. This may sound strange (in a game as realistic as *MotorStorm*, surely everything should be as lifelike as possible?) but despite its believable visuals, it's firmly situated in the arcade racer side of things. Don't get us wrong, each vehicle feels completely unique to the last and you'll still need to drive with skill to win; however, it won't mean tweaking your car's torque or increasing its horsepower. It's all about hitting the open road (or sandy, off-road desert, to be more appropriate) and putting your foot down. This is summed up perfectly by the fact that there's no on-screen speedometer. Whether you're travelling at 20mph or 200mph, the only true way to gauge your speed is to determine it for yourself and despite what you may have heard, this is quite simple. Even without feedback in the Sixaxis pad, it's obvious when you're tearing up a track, and *MotorStorm* really conveys a sense of speed. Evolution Studios has been extremely clever, as the blend between realism (graphics) and arcade (gameplay) mechanics has never been closer.

At times though, simply acceleration may not be enough, and that's where the ⊗ button comes into play; it's the doorway to the all-important boost, and it's downright essential. We're pretty sure you know how it works by now, but *MotorStorm* mixes events up slightly by limiting how much boost you can use. It's available to you at any time during a race, but causes your engine's temperature to increase. So, if you go a little bit crazy with it then expect your vehicle to go 'KABOOM!'.

Despite its arcadey nature, it forces you to be intelligent with it. Sure you can just whack ⊗ and hold it for as long as you dare, but there's a lot more fun, and success, to be had by figuring out where its optimum point is and seeing how far you can push it. It adds a dose of

THE CONTROL SYSTEM

It may be your typical setup, but the controls are tight and never provide a cause for concern. The real surprise in *MotorStorm* are the tilt features which actually work. Unlike *Ridge Racer 7*, using your control pad as a steering wheel makes sense, and those who give it time will eventually master it. We don't think it's an improvement over an analogue stick, but it's still worth trying.

The generic controls are great and the tilt method is darn good too

"Each Festival ticket is divided up into levels, and as soon as you hit level three, you'd have to be blind to not notice the change. The sheer carnage that takes place on screen is almost scary"

Profile

MOVIETASTIC

We all know how striking

but suffice to say you'll be inspired

"Extra speed aside, if you want to ensure a first-place finish you'll need to use your turbo power wisely"

CONTINUATION //

subtle strategy, and can be the all-important difference maker between glory and failure. The boost is also imperative when it's time to separate yourself from the rest of the pack. Extra speed aside, if you want to ensure a first-place finish you'll need to use your turbo power wisely. There will be times you fly around a corner, only to find it's a lot sharper than you originally expected. What to do, what to do? Well, if you don't want to fall off the edge of the course, it's a matter of hitting your nitrous at the right time to force your vehicle back in the right direction and back on track. Not only does it promote a great feeling of contentment and look rather good as well, but during the harder races it becomes your best friend. Use it at the wrong point and it'll take a truly awe-inspiring performance to win. The level of depth it brings is uncanny, but it's executed with the slightest of touches, meaning there's a chance you may not even realise how clever it is.

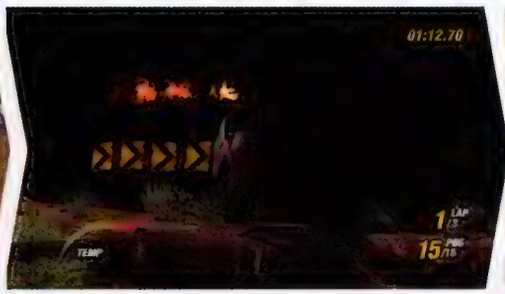
Unfortunately, there's a truly shocking flaw to *MotorStorm*'s brilliance – there's only one mode to take part in. There's no arcade mode, no time trial option, no multiplayer split-screen, and no online play. How on earth anyone thought this was acceptable we're unsure of, but it's a real disservice to a game of this calibre. Thankfully, Evolution has promised that when the North American and European versions are released later this year there will be significantly more

HOW TO...

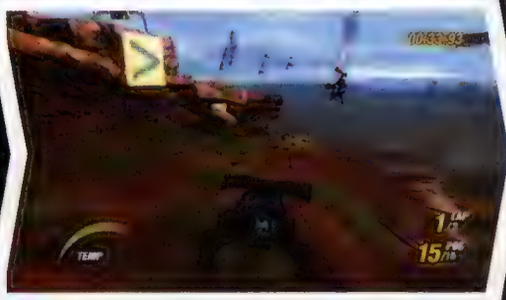
be jipped out of a medal in nine different ways

MotorStorm is host to one hectic environment. However, when everyone wants a piece of the action (or medal), your competitors can make your life a living nightmare. Here are nine events to avoid at all costs...

1 Technically, you've got no one else to blame but yourself, but hitting a rut in the track and smashing into a barrier usually means your race is over. You may lose valuable seconds, but it looks really good.

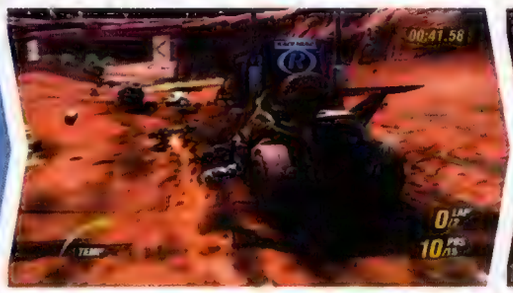


2 Whether you're in last place or have just lost that competitive edge, holding down the boost button until your car explodes is great fun.

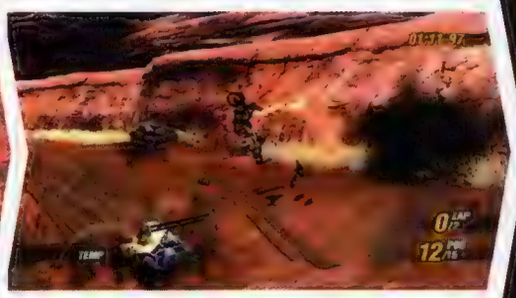


3 No, they haven't encroached upon you yet, but in five seconds' time when their wreckage litters the track, who will be in trouble? We'd say the person in fifteenth place. Be prepared to steer like mad.

4 There's only one way to wind up in this position and you'll experience it a lot. Even if your automobile is in pristine condition, smashing into a solid mountain will turn it into millions of pieces.

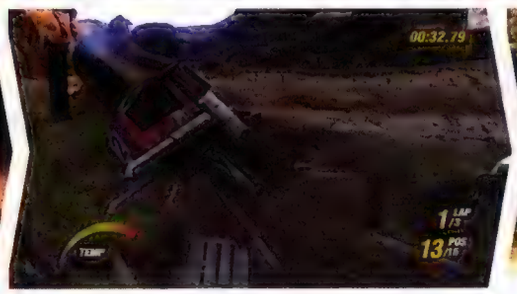


5 Now we're getting dangerous. If a big rig hits you, it's time to panic. You can try and avoid its devastation, but when it sneaks up from behind, it's likely you'll end up in a life-threatening position.



6 Never use your boost on a blind corner. If you do, there's a good chance that your needless burst of speed will result in you noticing the next bend far too late, and, well, you're toast.

7 Picture the scene (or just look at this screenshot): you're in fourth place, feeling confident, and then the ATV behinds you explodes – no chance.



8 Always keep your eyes on the road. A well-concealed rock can have dire effects, even at a slow speed. Your vehicle will go through an outlandish amount of rotations before becoming scrap metal.

9 Some people are just mean, and others are killers. If someone is intent on maiming you, they will, and you'll be forced to endure the horrible sight of the havoc physics engine in full-effect.

SUMMARY: IT'S ONE CLEVER GAME AND HAS A BUNCH OF TRICKS TO SLOW YOU DOWN.

content, and has also promised to patch the Japanese version so it can benefit from the PlayStation Network. The big question now hangs over whether or not it'll be any good. The thought of *MotorStorm* online makes us quite excited, but until we can go hands-on with it to see if it lives up to the standard set in its single-player, we can't comment. It also seems as if another developer will be the brains behind it, and although that doesn't mean it'll be bad, we would have really liked to have seen what Evolution could have brought to the table. For now, we'll all have to play the waiting game.

We're pretty sure you've picked up on it, but *MotorStorm* is the game at the moment for the PS3. It looks phenomenal and achieves things that a previous generation title would never have been able to do. Its true stroke of genius is how it somehow continues to get better as you play through it. Once you're halfway through the level two races, you'll probably start thinking you've seen everything it has to offer, and then out of nowhere it shows you yet another weapon in its arsenal. If nothing else, the way it manages to make eight tracks feel completely different every time you play through them is a work of art. Sadly, as we've already pointed out, it's hampered due to its lack of modes. Yes, the Festival option will keep you busy for a while, but to achieve its full potential it needs more. Fortunately, these are coming, and they could prove to be *MotorStorm*'s greatest triumph.

If you live in a magical world where you have access to both a Japanese and American PS3, we'd say hold out for the US version; but saying that, if you have both we're guessing money isn't a major problem. If you simply can't resist, then take the plunge; there's no way you'll be disappointed with this baby.

Simon Miller

next[3] verdict

OVERALL COMMENT

MotorStorm is the first real next-generation racer, and has set the benchmark for everything that follows it. When the extra modes come along change this score into nine, and even, maybe, a ten.

08 OUT OF 10

IMPORT REVIEW
US EDITION

BLAZING ANGELS: SQUADRONS OF WWII

Insert 'chocks away' gag here

PS3 INFORM

Publisher Ubisoft
Developer In-house
Release Date Out now
Price £Import
Players 1-2 (2-16 online multiplayer)
Genre Shoot-'em-up
Supports 720p, Dolby Digital, PlayStation Network
Age Rating N/A
Website www.blazing-angels.com
Demo No

OPINION// If you're thinking that *Blazing Angels* looks a little familiar, you'd be right – it appeared on Xbox 360 roughly a year ago. In what seems to be the norm for these early days of the PS3, a publisher is taking the easy route by just giving a game that's already been developed for another next-gen system. It might make financial sense in their book, but we're more than a little tired of it.

Blazing Angels does have the auspicious accolade of being the first flying game to hit the PS3 and it actually makes good use of that much-vaunted tilt function offered by the Sixaxis controller, which we must say has been criminally underused thus far.

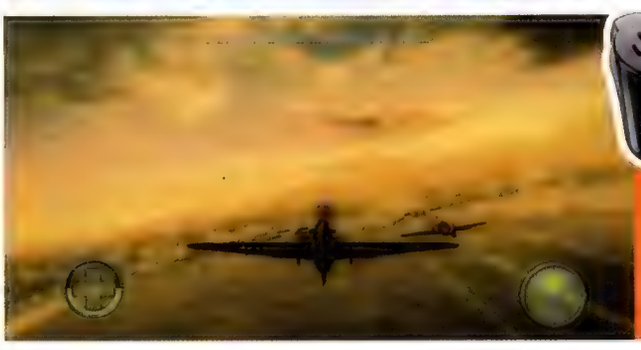
Anyway, as you can probably tell from the title, *Blazing Angels* puts you in the cockpit of a variety of WWII aircraft and lets you do battle with the best pilots Germany and Japan has to offer over such locations as London, Paris, Berlin and Pearl Harbor, to name but a few. The majority of aircraft on offer may well be prop-planes and not as fast as your fancy jets, but we must admit there is a certain thrill to flying the little planes over war-torn landscapes. It's a similar feeling found in most WWII first-person shooters, they just seem to have more appeal than their more up-to-date counterparts.

Blazing Angels certainly captures the feel of WWII air combat with some faithfully recreated aircraft and nicely detailed – for the most part – locations. Plenty of fancy lighting effects have also been employed and seeing the sun streaking through huge plumes of smoke over a bombed city is a startling realistic sight. However, these fancy visuals do come at a price, and if you fly too close to an explosion the frame rate will drop dramatically to almost an almost snail-like pace. This was a problem that reared its head in the Xbox 360 version; but not only does it appear that the extra development time has not improved it in anyway, we'd even go so far a to say that the flaw is even more pronounced. Hardly the way of the future, is it?

The gameplay is one area where we didn't expect any changes and we weren't proven wrong. Having spent some time with the 360 version when it was originally released, we found the combat fun but ultimately rather repetitive, with each mission offering slight variations on the same objectives. Nothing has changed for the PS3 version and those objectives have remained identical with the bulk of missions, requiring you to assault an

TAKE COMMAND
The icon on the bottom-left of the screen represents your three wingmen and the orders that you can give to them. Using the direction buttons you can pick specific wingmen to make use of their particular abilities or you can simply order all of them to attack, defend or get in formation. Simple, eh?
Planes highlighted in red are hostile or simply the enemy.
Stuff highlighted in blue are friendly, so try not to shoot them.
HEADS UP
The radar on the bottom-right will display all enemy and friendly aircraft, plus any ground targets there might be. While it comes in useful when you only have a solitary target, it does become somewhat difficult to read when there are planes all over the place.

Tom: Easy there, Frank. We're all going to need to keep our cool on this one.
There's Parliament just waiting for you and the lads to protect it from the incoming attack. Make Winston proud.
Parliament



THE CONTROL SYSTEM

Tilting is a nice addition, but we still prefer the analogue sticks.

area by shooting down aircraft and attacking ground units, or defending an area by shooting down aircraft and attacking ground units. Bombing or taking reconnaissance photos provide some variations in the gameplay, but nothing cures the feeling of repetition that pervades much of the experience. Still, the ma,ority of the gameplay is fast and frantic, which is great if that's what you're after. An especially nice touch is the aptly named 'Follow Camera' that anchors the camera to a target and pan round your plane. Disconcerting at first, it helps you stay on course and provides some interesting viewpoints.

The length of a few of the missions is also a bone of contention. While we want the game to last more than a couple of hours, the seemingly endless waves of fighters and bombers that are thrown at you in some of the missions get more than a little tedious after a while, often seeming like a device to extend the length of the mission. Fortunately you're not flying the unfriendly skies alone and you have three wingmen to keep you company in the majority of the missions. The boys in your squadron aren't just there so you have someone to talk to, each one has a purpose and it's up to you whether you take advantage of their special skills during campaign or not. Unusually in a game like this your wingmen will actually make kills without being prompted, so it does feel like they take an active role, rather than just flying around aimlessly waiting to be told what to

Profile

WINGMAN -TOM

Profile

WINGMAN - JOE

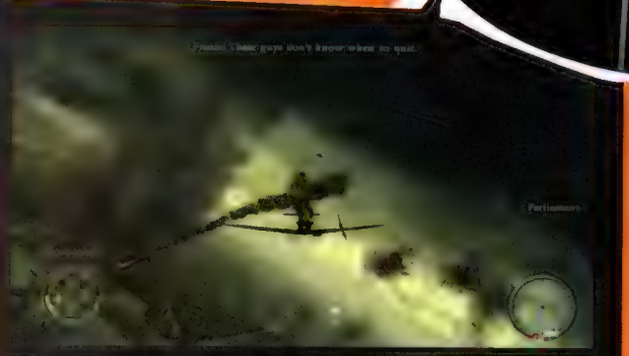
Joey is the mechanic of the squad and if [illegible] plane he can fix it.

Button combination that will fix anything

"Ultimately rather repetitive, with each mission offering slight variations on the same objectives"

nextGen

What defines this game as a 'Next-Gen' PlayStation 3 title?



The Roaring Forties

Just look a this screenshot, this kind of detail would never have been possible on the PS2. The gorgeous lighting effects, the swirling smoke, the detailed planes – it's all good. Shame the frame rate drops so much when anything too dramatic happens.

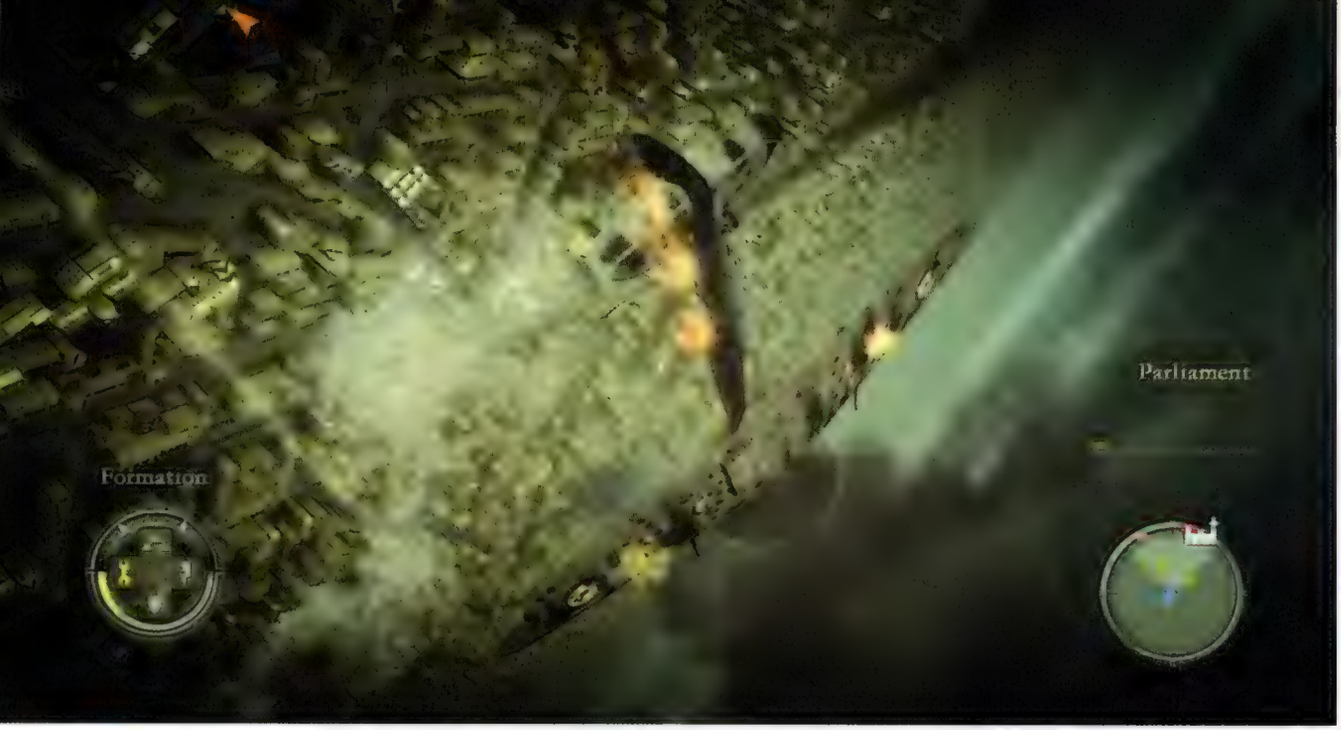
CONTINUATION //

do. So often in flying games your comrades will fly around the sky shooting at enemies, but never actually managing to contribute anything worthwhile towards the objectives – thankfully that isn't the case here. If you and the lads do well enough in a mission by destroying a large number of enemies or performing some other heroic feat you will be awarded with a medal – you might even unlock one of the 46 planes on offer for use in one of the other modes.

These modes vary and include an arcade experience that pits you against waves of enemies – so not all that dissimilar to the campaign mode, then? There's also the Ace Duel, which puts you up against a solitary pilot in an identical aircraft. While the AI is greatly improved in this mode, it still isn't all that hard to defeat your adversary and all you get for your trouble is a new paint-job for the plane, leaving you to wonder if it was even worth it. To round off the single-player experience you can also unlock a mini-campaign by completing the main mission. This gives you two new sets of six missions that involve dog fighting or bombing. Completing these will upgrade weapons on all the planes, which makes it more worthwhile, although you will have already finished all the main missions, so is it really that useful?

Multiplayer hasn't been forgotten and not only can you play with a friend via split-screen, you can also head online to engage in battle with up to 15 other people. The range of modes isn't exactly exhaustive, but there's enough to keep you amused, as long as you can find a decent amount of people to play with – although dog fighting can still be fun with just two players. The lack of voice support is disappointing, though and rather odd considering there are a number of team modes included in the multiplayer. You can still communicate with your team-mates, but only by the same method you use in the single-player, which seems ludicrous to us.

Once again, this isn't anything that the 360 version hasn't done already; however, there



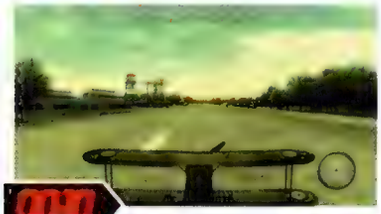
Profile

WINGMAN - FRANK

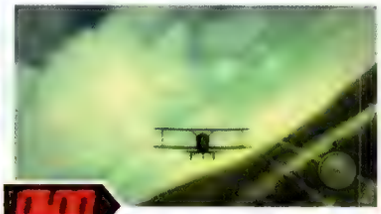
FIRST LEVEL TIMEWATCH

Nazi balloons and reconnaissance planes provide easy targets

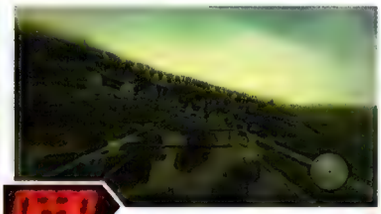
The first level is a nice and sedate training mission that lets you get to grips with the controls. This doesn't mean that you won't be seeing any action, though. Your guns should be blazing by the end of the level as some German planes will be appearing on the horizon pretty soon...



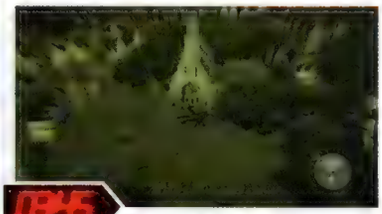
00:40 **Things start simply with a quick rotation of the right analogue stick required to start the engine up. Now power-down the runway until takeoff is possible.**



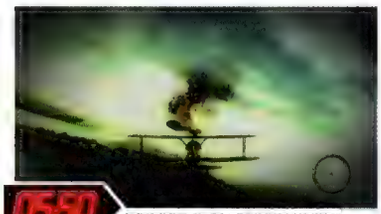
01:00 **Once you've taken off you are told to simply try the plane out so just do exactly that. Try a few rolls and even go for a loop, if you're feeling bold.**



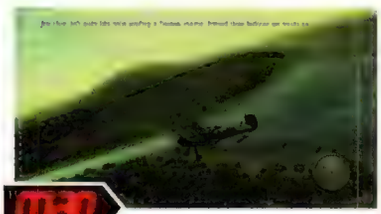
02:30 **Once you've got to grips with the plane, you're told to seek out the town and a handy marker appears to point you in the right direction.**



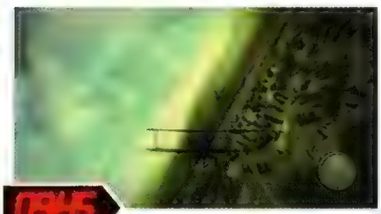
03:45 **The point of this excursion is to try out the targeting camera. Hold the required button and the camera will stay fixed on the church below.**



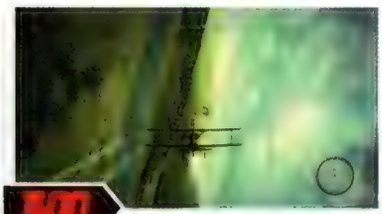
05:50 **Finally we get some action as a number of redundant balloons are selected as targets. Shooting them down couldn't be any easier, as they don't move.**



07:30 **It has become slightly more challenging now that you're given some ground targets to hit, but only because there is a risk of hitting the deck if you get over zealous.**



09:45 **After some brief bombing practice you are informed of a German plane doing some reconnaissance. A moving target proves to be much better training.**



11:00 **It's not over yet and you're quickly called to the aid of a returning allied pilot who has three enemies on his tail. Time to put to use what you've learned.**

SUMMARY: IT'S A DECENT ENOUGH INTRODUCTION TO THE GAME BUT THERE'S SOMETHING MISSING THAT FROM THE GUY DYING OUT THE DOOR

is an area where the PS3 gets one over on its Microsoft competitor and that's thanks to the Sixaxis. As mentioned earlier, the motion-sensing function has been put to good use and you can tilt the controller back and forth to dive or climb, and left and right to roll. It works well but there is a slight delay, which can cause some nasty accidents if you're flying too close to the ground. We tried both control options and we have to say that the analogue still came out as the preferred method, but kudos should still go to Ubisoft for implementing it in the first place.

Another aspect that impresses is the deft use of sound effects throughout the game. From the rattling machine guns to buzzing engines, everything sounds authentic – as far as we can tell, anyway – and is particularly impressive if you happen to have a surround sound setup. The voice acting provided for your wingmen and other characters isn't quite as impressive, though. It often delves into the depths of cheesiness, and is also riddled with clichéd vernacular that gets tiring pretty quickly. Unlike most of the dialogue featured in wartime FPS games that usually does a good job of drawing you into proceedings, much of it in *Blazing Angels* tends to do the opposite.

Ultimately, *Blazing Angels* falls a little short of what we had hoped for from the next generation of gaming. With its arcade-style gameplay and cheesy dialogue, it's difficult to take it seriously. Considering the subject matter, it could do with more grittiness injected to make the experience more authentic. On the plus side, the visuals often look strikingly realistic, but it's a shame the rest of the game seems to be stuck in the PS2 generation. Couple that with the fact that the title has already been out for a year on another system and looked pretty much identical and you're left with something that will pass the time but not much else.

Simon Griffin

next3 verdict

OVERALL COMMENT

Fun for a while, but the rudimentary and repetitive gameplay soon grow tiresome. Multiplayer could have been fun if some voice support had been included, but that's a let-down too.

06 OUT OF 10

IMPORT REVIEW

FIGHT NIGHT ROUND 3

Can EA go the distance?

PS3 INFORM

Publisher EA
Developer In-house
Release Date Out now
Price £Import
Players 1-2 (2 online multiplayer)
Genre Sport
Supports 480i, 720p, Dolby Digital, PlayStation Network
Age Rating N/A
Website www.fightnight3.co.uk
Demo No

OPINION // Graduating from the hit-and-miss *Knockout Kings* series, EA changed its tactics and introduced us to *Fight Night* in 2004 – boxing titles were never the same again. This latest next-gen iteration arguably provides the most realistic boxing game ever.

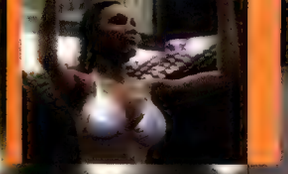
With no competition on the PS3, as it looks like Ubisoft aren't bothering to bring their *Rocky* licence to the console, it wouldn't be that surprising if EA didn't work as hard on *Fight Night* as it perhaps might. Thankfully, that isn't the case and, as the Xbox 360 version has demonstrated, *Fight Night* really is one of the jewels in the publisher's crown.

Total Punch Control – introduced in the first *Fight Night* – returns and gives a greater influence over punching that any button combination ever could. While unwieldy at first, the use of the right analogue stick to punch is far more intuitive and satisfying than using buttons. For those unfamiliar with the system, you push 'up' and 'right' to throw a right jab, and 'up' and 'left' to throw a left jab. Other punch types follow a similar idea, with the analogue stick axis being put to use for uppercuts and hooks. It does take time to become accustomed to the method and no doubt you'll take a pummelling in the first few fights, but once you get the hang of it the buttons will seem so simplistic and limited that you'll never want to use them again.

The gameplay itself has been slowed down somewhat from previous versions, which serves to make the experience a more measured and tactical affair, rather than the blur of fists that earlier versions often degenerated into. Parrying and counterpunching is now more important than ever, with skilled blocking an absolute must, unless you pick a fighter such as La Motta or Hatton who can take large amounts of punishment without going down.

Also notable is the lack of an energy bar; the removal of it is in keeping with EA's quest to make *Fight Night* as realistic as possible. Disconcerting at first, you'll soon get used to utilising the commentator's remarks and the appearance of your dazed boxer to gauge the situation. It's easy to recognise when to play defensively too, just as you can tell when your fighter has a burst of energy that will enable him to land a few hard punches.

Keeping that energy up between rounds is very important and once again there's a mini-game to keep you amused during the break while you tend to cuts and swelling. However, this time you only have to worry about the left and right sides of the face, rather than the four zones found in *Fight Night Round 2*. This makes effective repair of your boxer's face much easier, which can only be good if you're getting a pummelling.

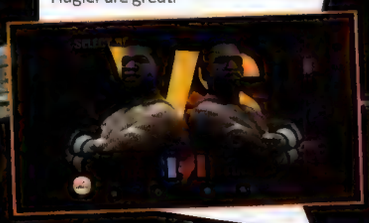


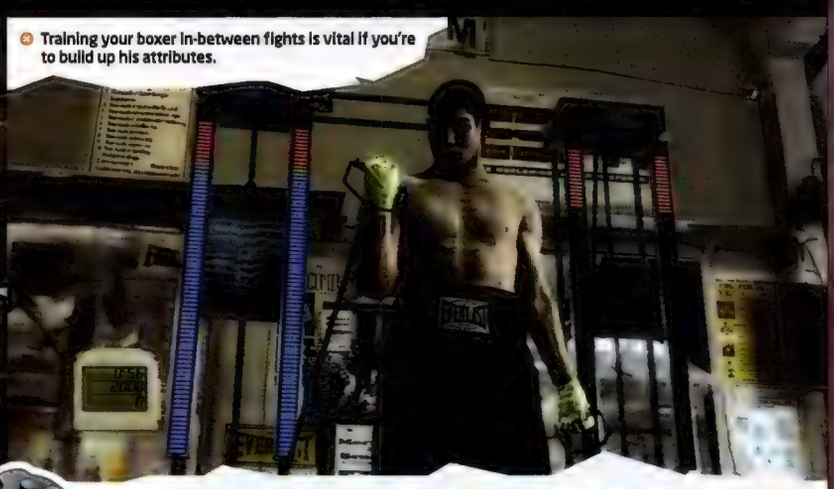
Of note
Advertising is heavy in *Fight Night Round 3* – get ready to drive to Burger King in your Dodge Caliber.

Of note
No energy bars means you rely on the face of your boxer to see how they're doing.

YOU STARTING?
Taunting your opponent is a sure fire way to piss them off, but they'll have the last laugh if they smack you square in the mush, mid-taunt. Of course, if you taunt and then follow it up with a big punch then you'll look awesome.

CHOOSE WISELY
Picking the right boxer is of utmost importance, as they all fight very differently. If you want someone who's light on their feet then Robinson or Jones Jr. are ideal. If you don't like blocking then boxers who can take punishment like LaMotta or Hagler are great.





Training your boxer in-between fights is vital if you're to build up his attributes.

THE CONTROL SYSTEM

ABOUT THE CONTROL SYSTEM: You can choose between the analogue and button controls just like you could in *Fight Night Round 3* and very little has changed in that respect. The analogue controls do feel even more responsive and satisfying than before, making the game even more of a pleasure to play. The less said about the tacked-on tilt function the better – stuck for useful ideas, lads?

With a bit of practice you will be throwing punches like a pro.

Profile

FUBAR

If you or your opponent gets too badly damaged then it's quite possible that the referee will stop the fight. That's why effective healing and blocking is important.

Of course, you can still opt for the auto healing but as any *Fight Night* fan will know, it's hardly worth bothering with.

Round 3 sticks to the usual formula where game modes are concerned, apart from the new PS3-exclusive Get In The Ring mode. This interesting addition changes the camera angle to a first-person view and even goes as far as blurring your vision when you get hit in the face too many times. This mode is fun for a while but the novelty does wear off slightly and the fact that the difficulty seems to be toned down for it also doesn't help. It's not ideal in two-player either, as the camera angle requires a split-screen approach.

Other modes feature the ESPN Classic matches, which includes legendary bouts from boxing history such as Robinson versus La Motta. Some of these matches, like the aforementioned La Motta bout are in black and white for that added authenticity. However, that authenticity rapidly evaporates when the boxers come out to the same old hip hop soundtrack that perforates the rest of the game, along with laser light shows – not very 1940s, is it? The pre-match history before these fights could be educational or, at the very least, informative, but unfortunately it's neither and is mercilessly short on info.

The near-constant reminder of sponsorship in the game also grates, not only in this Classic mode but in almost every other fight, with Dodge and Burger

nextGen

What defines this game as a 'Next-Gen' PlayStation 3 title?

Below The Belt

The Sixaxis controller is put to use, albeit in the smallest way imaginable. Simply thrust the controller away from your body to perform an illegal punch. Seeing as only dirty bottlers do that we won't be making much use of it.

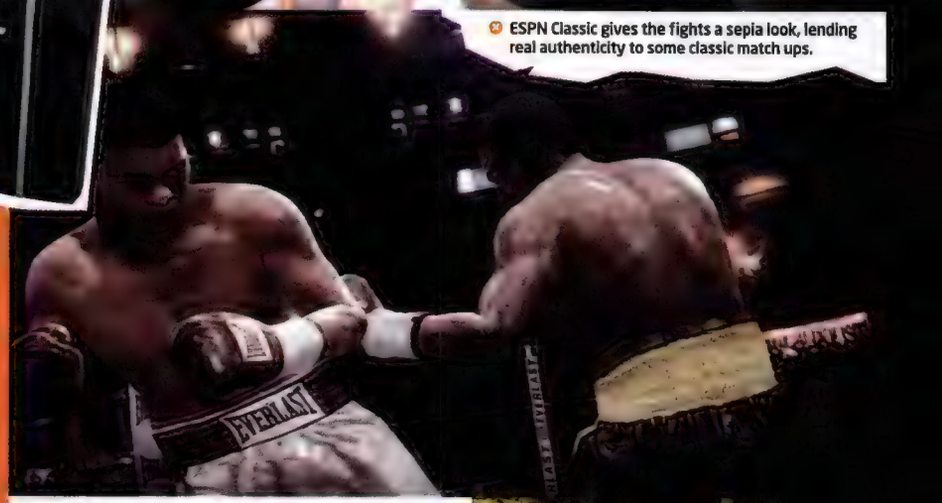
Super Punch Out!

Just look at it! Do you think the PS2 could come anywhere close to the realism that *Fight Night* PS3 contains? Maybe in a cut-scene it could come close to it but that doesn't count. This is one of the most next-gen looking games we've seen.

Blood, Net And Tears

It has an online mode that actually works and works very well indeed. Eat that rubbish PS2 online capabilities! Of course the silly Americans you meet dumb down the whole experience but that's not really the fault of the PS3.

ESPN Classic gives the fights a sepia look, lending real authenticity to some classic match ups.



Auto Heal is all well and good but it's best to learn Manual to patch up your fighter well.

CONTINUATION //

King being the main offenders. We don't mind a few ads, after all, what sport doesn't have a ridiculous amount of sponsorship and advertising these days? But we do take offence to it being as in-your-face as *Round 3* presents it; you can even unlock the Burger King mascot as a trainer for God's sake!

As for the range of boxers available during these various modes, well, it's reasonable but not exhaustive. There are pugilists from a variety of decades, including legends like Muhammad Ali, 'Sugar' Ray Robinson and Jake La Motta, alongside current fighters like Oscar de la Hoya, Micky Ward and Ricky Hatton; however, there are some notable omissions too. Evander Holyfield seems to have been misplaced in tne move from the 360 and Lennox Lewis, who appeared in *Fight Night Round 2*, has also been dropped. Fighters we'd love to see like Mike Tyson, Frank Bruno and Prince Naseem are all absent (unsurpris ngly) and will no doubt remain so in future versions, but the selection on offer is perfectly adequate and after trying them out you'll settle on a favourite.

The meat of *Fight Night* should be in the Career mode, and while it will certainly take up hours of you life to become the champ, it really is something of a disappointment. Stripped down from the Career mode found in *Fight Night Round 2* it has very little structure to it and mostly feels like a series of exhibition matches. The problem lies with the lack of tangible career progression and rather than moving up the rankings and picking your fights based on your opponent's position in the table, you now simply engage in fights to increase your popularity. Once the meter is full you can enter a special fight, which usually has a big reward involved. Win that and the process starts over again, albeit with slightly tougher opponents. The difficulty is another factor that holds back the Career mode; even on the toughest setting anyone who has played a *Fight Night* game before shouldn't lose a bout out of the first 30-40 they play. It's certainly nice winning all the time but it does

"Make your standard definition TV-owning mates gasp in awe and then beg for a go"

leave you wishing that you could sometimes take a beating in the first couple of rounds then make a glorious comeback; however, that's unlikely to happen unless you play for it. That's not to say you'll never lose a round, and once every so often you'll face a fighter whose fighting style disagrees with yours, but that is few and far between.

Another good idea that is soured by the relative ease of most fights is the rivalries that can be formed. In classic boxing style a fighter you meet early on in your career will take a dislike to you and automatically turn into your rival. Fun at first, this idea rapidly gets tiresome as your fighter becomes more and more powerful, while your rival generally remains unchanged. This means every time you fight them it gradually gets easier and easier, until you wonder why exactly they keep challenging you when you systematically destroy them every time. Rival fights do differ in other ways with a pre-match weigh-in that invariably sees your opponent taking a swing at you, although whether he knocks you down or not seems to have no bearing on the following fight, making the whole spectacle a little pointless. Rival boxers are also more likely to throw illegal punches or try a headbutt, presumably because they hate you so much.

The rest of your career is made up of buying new items for your boxer with your winnings, and training with the three mini-games. These will be familiar to *Fight Night* fans and take the form of a combo dummy, weight training and heavy bag. All three involve quick reactions or a good memory, but nothing too taxing, which means your boxer should rapidly become as powerful or quick as any the majority of the opponents you are likely to face.

Your pugilist's style is something that will determine what skills will be easier to improve, as the Create-A-Boxer mode now gives you more options than ever before. You can pick stance, block type, boxing style and, of course, choose how they look – from a tall, lean guy with a long reach to a short, stocky bloke with a powerful punch. You can even create yourself a lumbering great butterball if the mood takes you – the choice is yours.

The online multiplayer was something that really made *Fight Night Round 3* a must-have title for many Xbox 360 owners and thankfully EA have brought exactly the same elements to the PS3 version. You can peruse plenty of stats that track your online career, as well as a wealth of parameters to tinker with to ensure you can have a fight the way you want to. One omission is the ability to filter players who use the button controls rather than the analogue stick. You see, many players who opt for the buttons tend to simply bash them repeatedly, giving you little room to manoeuvre, and if you are using the analogue control then you have no chance of throwing punches as rapidly as they do. Of course, if the player is inexperienced then a few parries followed by haymakers should see them on their way, but it isn't always that easy and can be frustrating if you'd prefer to play the game at a more sedate pace.

Profile

FLASHER

Land a so-called Flash KO punch perfectly and your opponent could be knocked down immediately. These punches take time to wind up, leaving you open to attack, so you know

"The removal of the energy bar is in keeping with EA's quest to make Fight Night as realistic as possible"

CONTINUATION //

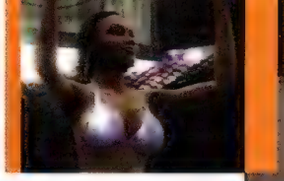
However, the online aspect is one thing that increases the longevity of *Fight Night*, particularly when you're done with the Career mode. You can even use your 'modded' boxer online if you've retired him from his career. Lag seems to be a rare issue and the interface is pleasingly simple to interact with. One annoyance is that you can't go straight into a rematch with an opponent, as you are returned to the menu when a fight is over, but it's easy to find someone else to beat on.

How this compares visually to the Xbox 360 version has been the source of much discussion around the office; some believe it to be vastly superior, while others claim to not notice any difference between the two games. To be honest there is very little in it, although the PS3 version does just about have the edge with a few little improvements here and there, most notably an ever-so-slight increase in detail on the boxers themselves and slightly less milky-looking sweat. Even if it looked exactly the same we would still be happy, as the 360 version looked stunning. The animation doesn't appear to have been altered in any way and the rather odd rag doll physics that kick in when a boxer is knocked down are still present, but the realism of that particular element has been improved markedly since the first *Fight Night*. Clipping problems, with feet passing through the canvas and boxer's shorts passing through their legs, still rear their ugly heads but there has been an improvement upstairs – or so it appears – and it's less common for gloves to pass through arms or heads during replays, which helps the game to maintain that ever-so-important realism.

Even the backgrounds look nice; well, in your peripheral vision they do. Look too closely and you'll see the crowd for the cardboard cut-outs that they are, but it's the fighters that are the main attraction, so it's not a major issue. All these good looks really require an HD TV to be fully appreciated but the game still looks great on a normal display, although the detail will obviously be reduced somewhat.

These fancy visuals do come at a price though, and the PS3 loads noticeably slower than on other formats. The Boxer Creation mode is hampered by this and switching between options often becomes a laborious process. Quite why the PS3 version has this problem is unclear, but it's disappointing that EA didn't optimise it fully for whatever reason.

Training in some disciplines improves attributes whilst damaging others.



Profile

QUOTE OF THE DAY

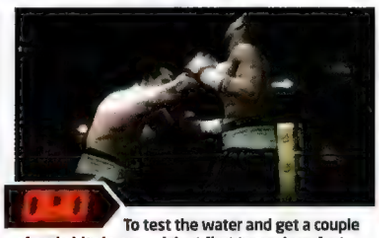
During his commentary Joe Tessitore quotes Jake La Motta saying 'I've fought 'Sugar' [illegible] thought was funny.

FIRST LEVEL TIMEWATCH

Rumble in the joypad? No, but there's tilt control with the Sixaxis.

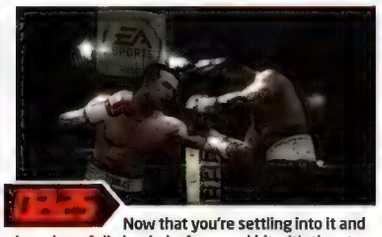
If you've never played a *Fight Night* game before then you're likely to get your ass handed to you at first. Here's how your first fight will ideally go.

00:00 You probably won't like blocking too much at first so pick someone who can take a beating and stay on their feet. Jake La Motta is our personal favourite.



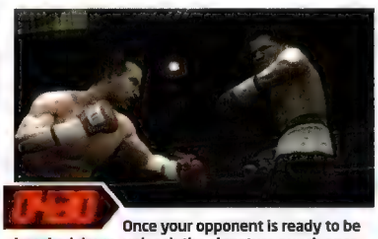
00:30 To test the water and get a couple of early hits in, use a jab at first to see how fast your opponent reacts to them and whether they are big on parrying and counterpunching.

01:30 If you've made them block upstairs then go for some body punches while their midsection is exposed. Hooks are more effective than jabs, but they are easier to parry.



02:25 Now that you're settling into it and have hopefully landed a few good hits, it's time to unleash La Motta's signature punch to the body and watch your opponent wince.

03:00 The end of the first round and hopefully you've had the best of the fight, so head to your corner and try out the healing mini-games to fix any damage done.



04:30 Once your opponent is ready to be knocked down, unleash the signature punch once again. It's rarely blocked and almost guarantees a knock-down - it's cheap but it works.

05:30 Now we're well into the fight it may be wise to hold off on the big punches unless you can guarantee that they will land, as you'll only end up wearing yourself out unnecessarily.

07:00 Keep plugging away making sure to parry when you can, while trying to stay away from the ropes until you can bag the victory. Now take what you've learned and become the champ!

SUMMARY: YOUR FIRST FIGHT CAN PUT YOU OFF CONTINUING IF YOU GET BEATEN TO A PULP, BUT ONCE YOU MASTER THE CONTROLS IT BECOMES VERY REWARDING.

Back to the plus points, and a major one is the audio. Repetitive hip hop tracks aside, the sound of leather on face has never sounded so painful – at least in a videogame, anyway. This is one title that definitely benefits from having a Dolby 5.1 setup or at least a subwoofer, as the impact sounds can be a little muted without some hefty bass behind them. The only other audio element of note is the commentary, which is once again provided by Joe Tessitore. It's not bad and he offers up some pretty accurate insights on what is happening in the ring. Not only that, he also provides information on the boxers, which is quite interesting the first couple of times. As with the majority of videogame commentaries, repetition is often a problem; however, it appears more pronounced here. But then considering all he has to talk about is punching, it's not really that surprising. It could definitely be improved but it does the job well enough.

While this isn't a massive leap forward from *Fight Night Round 2* in terms of gameplay, there's enough new stuff on offer to make it a definite improvement. It's easy to say this is the best boxing sim on PlayStation 3, as there's absolutely no competition. However, it would have to be something pretty special to tear us away from *Fight Night Round 3*. Yeah, some stuff from the Xbox 360 version hasn't been fixed and the loading could be faster, but this is still an absolute must-have, and one of a handful of PlayStation 3 games we can't stop playing. Regardless of whether you like boxing we implore you to give it a go, even if it's just to make your standard definition TV-owning mates gasp in awe and then beg for a go.

Simon Griffin

next3 verdict

OVERALL COMMENT

Some nice additions still don't hide the minor flaws carried over from the 360 version. Still, this is well worth your time and money, *Fight Night* is boxing at its finest.

08 OUT OF 10

IMPORT REVIEW

FULL AUTO 2: BATTLELINES

Who can resist these wheeled warriors?

PS3 INFORM

Publisher Sega

Developer Pseudo Interactive

Release Date Out now

Price £Import

Players 1-2 (2-8 online multiplayer)

Genre Racing

Supports 1080p, 720p, PlayStation Network

Age Rating N/A

Website www.sega.com/fullauto2

Demo No

OPINION// There has been no shortage of racing titles in the PS3's early line-up, and in fairness they've been a pretty mixed bag. Only a couple of months into its life and the PlayStation 3 may be reaching saturation point when it comes to middle-of-the-road driving games. In much the same way that *Full Auto* was introduced to the Xbox 360 at its launch in an attempt to give the genre a much-needed shot of adrenaline, *Full Auto 2: Battlelines* has stepped up to add some spice to the PS3. Shame that the game doesn't really hold up under great scrutiny then, because with so many features that scream mainstream appeal, *Battlelines* could have pulled it off. As it is, *Full Auto 2* will make as little impact on Sony's console as it did on Microsoft's.

The basic premise is a sound one and if you can get fully behind that then you're going to have a whale of a time. Essentially, Pseudo Interactive have got themselves a good handful of *Burnout* and an equally good handful of *Twisted Metal: Black* and then mixed the two together with a twist of *Need For Speed*. By this point we're probably losing a great many of you. Clearly this formula isn't going to appeal to everybody and as much as this hybrid ticks many of the right boxes in terms of accessibility, you can't get around the fact that it falls short in many respects. It never entirely convinces as a racer or a shooter. It's just brainless carnage – maybe that should be enough, but we need more.

Full Auto 2's biggest draw is of course its weapons and the mayhem that results from them. Having a shotgun mounted to the bonnet of your car can certainly make things interesting. However, the experience isn't a wholly satisfying one. Your primary and secondary weapons can both be controlled by the face buttons, but seeing as you have a reticule on screen at all times, you also have the option to aim and fire your primary weapon using the right analogue. Clicking it in fires the weapon. In theory this probably sounds okay, but in practice it is a frustrating waste of time and effort. With the handbrake and secondary weapon controlled using the face buttons, the right analogue seems like a great distance away from the action. It's not even as if trying to aim with it works so well. Clicking in the stick to fire invariably nudges the reticule out of position and causes you to miss. Having said that, if you rely on the face buttons then you have to line up the reticule through steering the car alone and this obviously detracts from the racing element of the game. When playing the game in

METER MADNESS
This meter in the top left-hand corner tells you how much Nitro boost or 'unwreck' time you can draw upon. Unwreck gives you a second chance if you make a stupid mistake, but won't let you come back if you completely wrecked you motor. The boost is far more useful.

Of note
The maps aren't all that useful to you as they show so little ahead

Of note
The destructible environments can leave obstacles in your way

RETICULE RAGE
The fact that you can aim and shoot your primary weapon using the right analogue is all very well and good, but it can be quite distracting when you're coming up on a tight bend and you're almost in for the kill. Crashing into a wall at full speed will kill you off first.

The cars can take a serious battering before they collapse, as you can see for yourself, but if we take one more hit now, we're done for.

THE CONTROL SYSTEM

ABOUT THE CONTROL SYSTEM: The control setup for *Full Auto 2* really isn't anywhere near as smart as it may seem at first. The accelerator is on R2, but feels rather spongy and unresponsive, and the primary weapon controls on the right analogue leave a great deal to be desired. Pseudo Interactive hasn't introduced any tilt functions to the game, but that's probably a good thing, given the circumstances.

Overly complex and not very useful ideas spoil a simple setup.

Profile
THE ARDENT
This is a basic C-class vehicle and the first car given to you at the start of the game. It has reasonable handling and speed, but it's easy to damage and can't carry too many weapons

multiplayer everyone is in the same boat so you can't really complain about it. In fact playing this game online is probably the best way to tackle it. While playing in the career or arcade mode, the inaccuracy in the firing is incredibly frustrating because the AI doesn't have the same aiming difficulties as you. As much as we dislike the idea in most shooting games, some kind of lock-on feature may have been useful to even things out. At least then we would have the option to use it or not.

As we've said, all these aiming issues don't help with the driving side of things, but it's not as if the cars handle all that well anyway. They're a little lightweight for our liking particularly from a standing start when they sway all over the place. They also have an unnerving habit during moments of great peril of suddenly deciding that they're in a *Ridge Racer* game and go about swinging from side to side. Not so brilliant when you've got a couple of pick-up trucks bearing down on you with rocket launchers. There really isn't any skill to the driving at all, probably so that you can concentrate more on the shooting, but we've already explained why that's a non-starter. Individually these complaints are relatively small or infrequent problems, but when the two most important elements of your game don't hold, you're in some trouble. Many of these issues were also present in the original and there's been enough improvements to make *Full Auto 2*

next3view

FULL AUTO 2: BATTLELINES

Profile

THE JUPITER

One for all the hot rod fans out there this car doesn't steer so well and it certainly won't be winning you many races; however, it can take a serious battering and still come out victorious.

"It's just brainless carnage and maybe that should be enough, but we need more"

nextGen

What defines this game as a 'Next-Gen' PlayStation 3 title?

Destruction Derby

The destructible environments in *Full Auto 2* are quite impressive and your car can get pretty bashed up too if you're not careful. Shooting out walls can often lead to some useful shortcuts, so it's always worth checking.

CONTINUATION //

a little more playable and a little less frustrating than its predecessor.

Battlelines has also tried to build on the original by adding new features, seemingly with a view to expanding its appeal and longevity. A career mode with a full plot has been added to build on the original single-player game. The story itself is that – according to the post-apocalyptic sat-nav called S.A.G.E. – the streets have been taken over by maniacal automotive gangs and you are the only one who can defeat them, by competing in their crazed competitions and battles. This is all broken down into various districts, each with sets of competitions to be one. It's very much like *Need For Speed*'s setup in *Carbon*. With each race comes a list of primary and secondary objectives to be fulfilled. Fail the primaries and you will have to try again. Achieve the secondary objectives and you're rewarded with bonuses and upgrades.

However, those secondary objectives are relatively pointless as you could easily waste several hours trying to complete them, only to be given a new decal kit for one of your car models. The important stuff like weapons and new vehicles are yours just by completing the primary missions. The Boost and Unwreck functions are still included; but, just as before, the ability to go all *Prince Of Persia* and turn back the clock isn't really all that useful and seeing as both functions feed off of the same meter, the ability to catch the leading pack will always be more useful.

In keeping with the mainstream theme, there is also an impressive list of licensed songs in the game; however, instead of playing in the background, they're attached to particular models of car. As you close in on another racer you will begin to hear the music take over from the generic beats you usually hear. This sounds better in theory than in practice as the transitions between background music are far from smooth. Like

When things really start to kick off it can be pretty difficult to see what's going on, so it's always best to just shoot anything that moves and hope for the best.

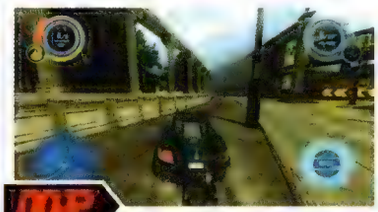
Profile
THE STREAMLINE

FIRST LEVEL TIMEWATCH

It's driving *and* shooting. Your two favourite things in one game!

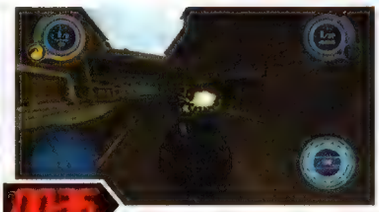
Having been told of your mission to take down the marauding gangs of wacky racers who are dominating the city, you'll be introduced to your first car and the basics of *Full Auto 2*. There's not much to it, but there should be a few things that you can learn from the experience...

00:01 The very first track is basically a training exercise, but there are still things to achieve. Every race will begin with a rolling start so you don't need to worry about timing the throttle.

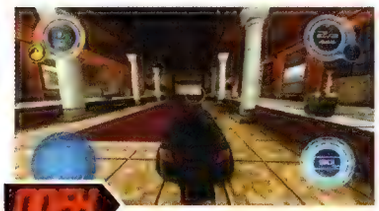


00:12 Despite the fact that you're not going up against any other racers on this course, your motor is still equipped with front and rear weapons. These will come in handy shortly.

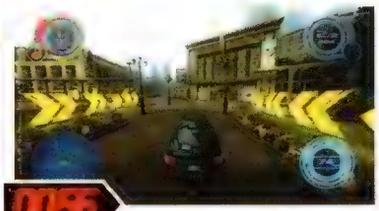
00:30 The game will give you prompts as to when you should think about using your car's special features. In this case it thinks using the boost on a straight may be smart.



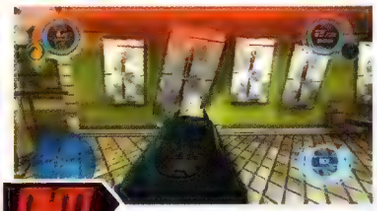
00:36 Now your weapons can come into play as you destroy objects that stand in your way. It's always good to be in the habit of shooting first and asking questions later in *Full Auto 2*.



00:54 Excellent! We've found one of *Full Auto 2*'s many short cuts. It's always worth taking a look around as you speed through the course for the many little passages like this.



00:56 Mind where you're going as you exit the short cut. You've probably picked up some speed so get those guns ready to clear any obstacles that may be in your way.



01:01 Inevitably you're going to crash at some point, even on this rather easy circuit. In our case we were after the spanner icon that would have healed our car and made it more presentable.

01:12 Success or at least a marginal one. We've managed to complete the course in less than 01:15, but we took some heavy damage from that crash and could have finished faster.

SUMMARY: THIS INTRO TO THE GAME OFFERS NO REAL CHALLENGE OTHER THAN GETTING TO GRIPS WITH THE CAR AND CURVES. FRANKLY WE WERE SO BORED

so much else in *Battlelines*, it's a good idea that hasn't been implemented very successfully.

The frame rate had been a problem in the original game, but this has now been improved and it runs far smoother than before. There are still some slowdown problems, but strangely not when the destructible environments are falling around you. Sometimes the frame rate just drops without warning. We also came across some glitching issues during the Gladiator battles – enemies appeared out of thin air, guns blazing, and on one occasion driving straight through a wall into an endless abyss that caused us to lose the bout. We were surprised and disappointed, as we shouldn't have to put up with problems like this these days.

Battlelines has a lot of negatives, but you could just as easily say that it's just a very simple game. It isn't looking to challenge the great racing franchises, nor is it trying to appeal to hardcore racing fans. It's braindead junk, but you could happily play this all weekend with your mates. The basics of the game (driving and shooting) seemed flawed to us and that detracted heavily from our enjoyment of the single-player modes. The new features that have been added don't really come to much in the end, either.

It's a great-looking game with some interesting locations, but the tracks aren't all that challenging. The havoc you can create is dazzling at times, but we were driven to distraction by the poor control setup. If you can look past the flaws then there's no doubt you'll have fun with *Full Auto 2*, but it could have been so much better. It has the makings of a mass-market title, if only it were delivered with a little more finesse. With so many racing games already available on the PS3, this one should probably sit low on you list of priorities.

Jon Gordon

next3 verdict

OVERALL COMMENT

Combining two very popular genres should have made *Full Auto 2: Battlelines* an instant winner, but it's still too flawed to truly captivate and tends instead to annoy.

05 OUT OF 10

IMPORT REVIEW

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG

Speed is most certainly of the essence

PS3 INFORM

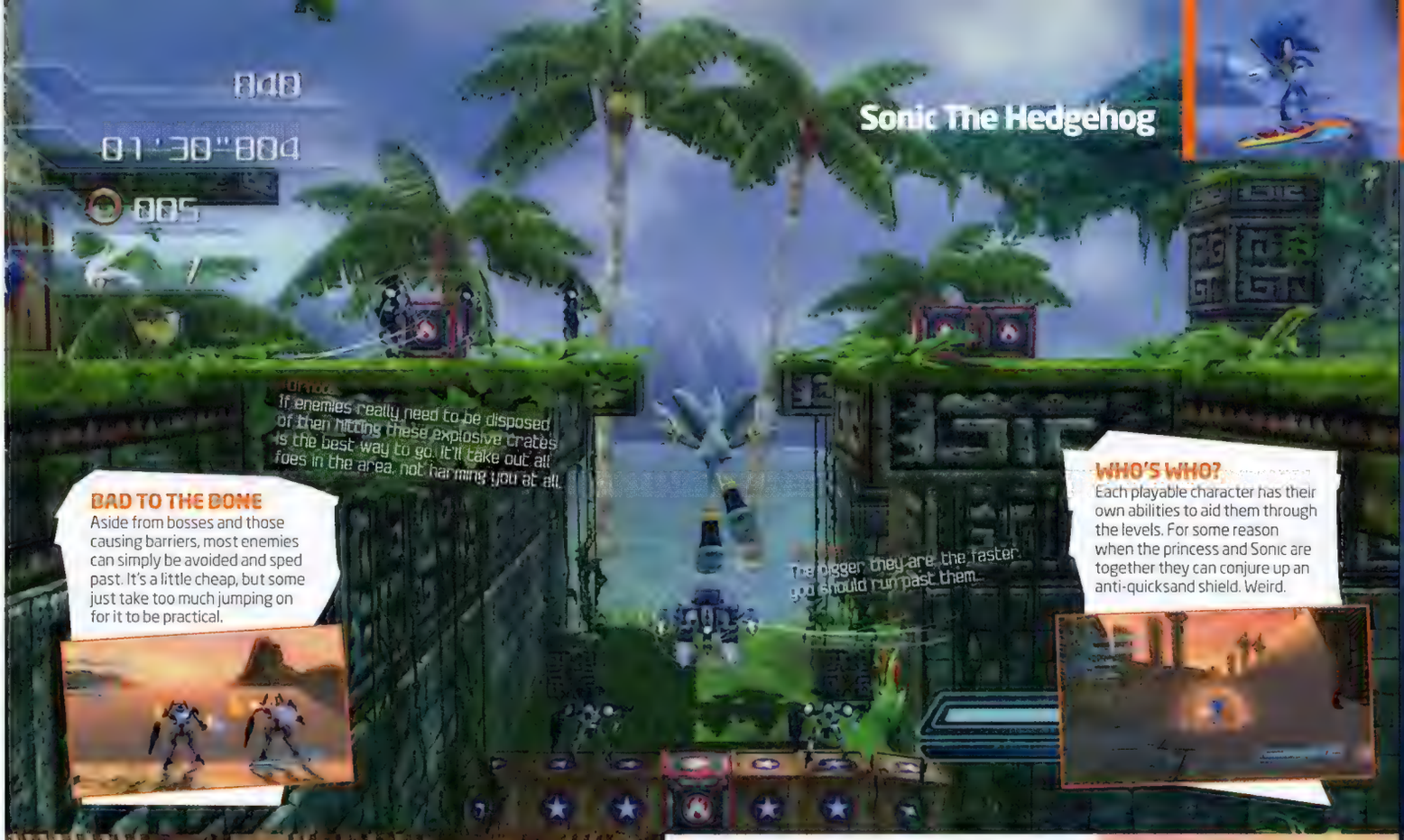
Publisher Sega
Developer Sonic Team
Release Date Out now
Price £Import
Players 1 (1-4 online multiplayer)
Genre Platform
Supports 720p, Dolby Digital, PlayStation Network
Age Rating N/A
Website www.sega.co.uk
Demo No

OPINION// Occasionally a game lands in your lap that you really want to enjoy. We work in a very cynical business that's buzzing with as many inferior titles as there are worthy ones and the majority of these can be given either moniker before the disc has even entered the console. However, there are some that can't. Sometimes you are faced with a franchise that's known for delivering joy and perfection as much as it is disappointment and poorness, and in this situation you just have to cling to the happy times. *Sonic The Hedgehog*, in case you haven't guessed, is such a title.

Over the many years we have spent as gamers, Sega's hedgehog mascot has grown with us. Though, where we have grown into fine, strong and generally handsome individuals, Sonic has developed various diseases and starting 'hanging out with a bad crowd'. We were happy with Big the Cat. He was a likeable enough chap. But when Shadow started toting firearms and Charmy the Bee (now famously the most hated *Sonic* character in existence) forced us to grind our teeth into a fine – yet delicious – dust, we started to want to distance ourselves from our, once, pet. The jump to 3D wasn't a kind one for Sonic. It was one that had a rough landing and left him with something of a bad face. The *Adventure* titles were okay – but since that day we've been yearning for a decent offering from our favourite of the erinaceidae family.

So here it is. The dawn of a new-generation of console, and with it comes a *Sonic* game. The signs are good. Sonic Team may have seen a bit of a reshuffle recently, but the power of the PlayStation 3 combined with the lessons learnt from a number of mistakes should surely see this latest instalment of the, somewhat unpredictable, series grasp a level of quality that's acceptable. After all, it's really easy to impress people who have been waiting years to be impressed. And we've been waiting a long time. So does *Sonic* deliver? Well, that depends on exactly how patient you are.

Granted, it's an odd quality for a videogame to demand, yet it remains the case. If you are to enjoy *Sonic The Hedgehog* in any way, then you're going to need to be forgiving and patient. Remember when we said we'd grown into fine individuals? We weren't lying. We possess these qualities and so reaped the best from the game, but that doesn't prevent us seeing the many, many problems that are going to ruin the game for most.


If enemies really need to be disposed of then hitting these explosive crates is the best way to go. It'll take out all foes in the area, not harming you at all.
The bigger they are, the faster you should run past them.

BAD TO THE BONE
Aside from bosses and those causing barriers, most enemies can simply be avoided and sped past. It's a little cheap, but some just take too much jumping on for it to be practical.

WHO'S WHO?
Each playable character has their own abilities to aid them through the levels. For some reason when the princess and Sonic are together they can conjure up an anti-quicksand shield. Weird.

Sonic puts his anti-quicksand shield to good use. You won't believe how fortunate he is that he has one of these.

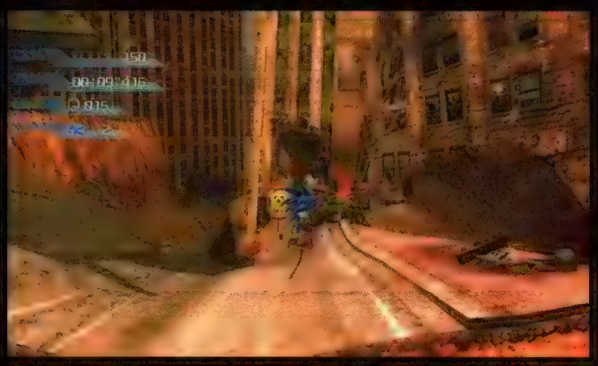
Profile
SPEAK EASY

nextGen

What defines this game as a 'Next-Gen' PlayStation 3 title?

Speed Kills

Well, it's certainly fast. Whether this sort of speed was possible on the last generation of games consoles isn't really for us to say, but *Sonic* definitely makes for a very good thrill ride.



Environmentally Speaking

Some of the environment and effects are dazzling. Unfortunately, these can occasionally become a little drab. It's times like these that you realise balance isn't always a good thing.

New Game, Same Game

... And that's about it. It may look nice and shiny, but we've all seen and played this game a few times before. There's far more on offer that is generic than there is that's new. It's sad but true.

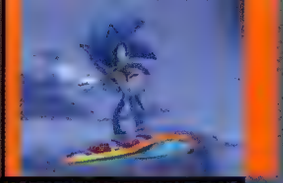
Sonic loves 'fresh powder'. He told us so himself.

Grinding is fun whether you have a board or your just wearing your shoes down. This is us wearing our shoes down.

CONTINUATION//

It's never nice to start a review in a negative manner, but there's one matter that's got to be dealt with straight away before we get too bogged down. The loading. We understand that all games must load, but *Sonic* really does load too much and it does it for too long. Every cut-scene, every stage... hell, even every line of a conversation at some points, has to load. It's infuriating and it's the first hurdle your patience must leap.

If you can stand to ignore it, however, the actual form the game takes is on show. You begin in the town of Soleanna. It's a pleasant enough place with sun, sea and probably some surf. There are also plenty of townsfolk hanging around who are willing to lend a hand, should a giant blue hedgehog (who's looking freakishly human now with his long legs) come speeding up to them and ask for help. This town and its surrounding area serves as a hub throughout the game with all the stages available being accessible by way of hidden/hard-to-reach magic mirror-type things. It's by far the blandest-looking area the game presents, and you are required too spend a little too much time exploring this town, as neglecting it only proves troublesome for you later. While around these parts there will be certain tasks that you *must* perform in order to progress. These usually involve going to the shop to buy whatever new object is in stock and then using this new object to reach the next stage portal. Sometimes you have to stop a small child from falling off the top of a building by using your newly acquired hover skid ability, or something. It's a simple routine, but one that's not made easier by the map/radar in the corner of your screen. Although your



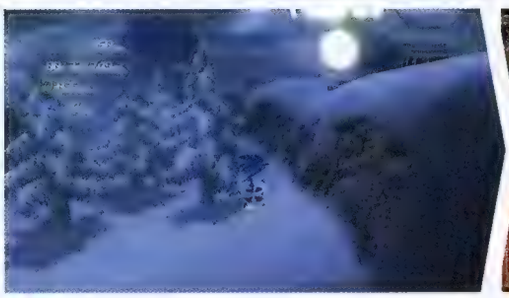
HOW TO...

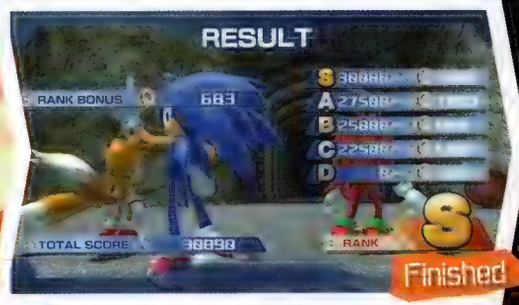
Score an S Rank on every stage

In *Sonic*, it's important to be fast. If you're not fast then you aren't going to get any of those S Ranks you want so badly. Here, we'll give you a few pointers on how to fly through those pesky stages.

1 As in every other *Sonic* title, rings are important. Almost every ring you see can be obtained without slowing, so figure out how to grab them and then be on your way.

2 If you hit an enemy then you're going to stop. Stopping is bad so don't hit enemies if you can possibly help it. It sounds obvious, but there's bound to be someone out there who doesn't figure it out.



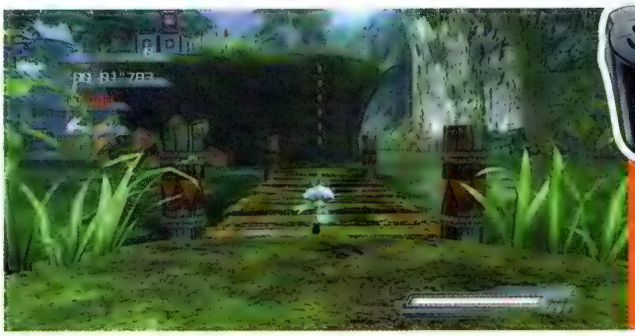


3 There are many routes through each of the stages and it's well worth doing a few trial runs to discover which is both the quickest and offers the most rewards.

4 Spend a while exploring the area before attempting a speed run. New routes can be found by dashing along rings or homing in on chains of enemies that hover over otherwise-impassable areas.

5 It sounds like a cop out, but if you want to get better you have to practice each course. Personally, we don't see why anyone would be that bothered to nudge the A to an S, but some might be.

SUMMARY: ALTHOUGH LUCK PLAYS A PART YOU SHOULD NOW BE ABLE TO SHAVE ABOUT A SECOND OFF YOUR COMPLETION TIMES



THE CONTROL SYSTEM

ABOUT THE CONTROL SYSTEM: There's nothing here that is particularly going to shock. The tilt abilities of the controller have been ignored, but with the control being twitchy enough as it is, this is probably a good thing. Mastery of the sensitive controls is necessary for any real progression, but there is plenty of satisfaction available to those who put in the required time.

The basic controls are hindered by sensitivity.

Profile

FRIENDS REUNITED

A multiplayer mode exists in *Sonic* that allows up to four people to play against each other. There's very little to it, but it's a nice distraction when you get weary of time trials. We'd be lying if we said it was good inclusion, but *Sonic* games have never been known for their multiplayer options so we deem it unfair to let a bonus such as this influence the score.

next point of interest is marked by a gold star, your view is limited and you can't see the marker unless you're right by it, meaning that travelling in the right direction is reliant on you asking townsfolk for directions and following their 'clues'. Some people – the ones w th blue markers above their heads – will offer you challenges that usually involve you running through lots of red rings really quickly. Although tedious, it's these challenges that supply all the bonus power-ups that aid you in the later stages. These mini-tasks may not be necessary for completion, but it's a good idea to take part in as many as possible for this reason. Without special boots and the like you'll be taking the hard road through many of the missions – and, in this particular *Sonic* game, the hard is *very* hard.

This is where our main gripe lies. It's not that we want games to be easy – that's a bit pointless – but it would be nice if your failing actually felt like it was down to you personally, rather than because the game decided to have a fit. For the most part the game is fine, once you've adjusted to Sonic being absurdly twitchy. Even the camera – something that's become a trademark problem with 3D *Sonic* games – has noticeably improved from what we saw in *Sonic Heroes* (Those who didn't see *Sonic Heroes*, we suggest you continue not to be tempted), but at times it seems a missed spring point of fall into oblivion is completely out of your control. A few errors of this kind soon mean that you've exhausted all your lives and it's back to the start of the stage. Another test for your ever-dwindling patience. The fact that many of the levels are effortless and require you only to perform the odd homing attack while the various boost pads and loops propel you through large sections of eye-candy, means that repeating areas may not be the most taxing act in the world, but it's just simply not a pleasant one when you're only doing it because, for lack of a better phrase, you've been jipped.

On the other side of all these niggles: *Sonic The Hedgehog* is probably the best *Sonic* game that's been around for a while. Well, 3D *Sonic* game, at least. The variety of

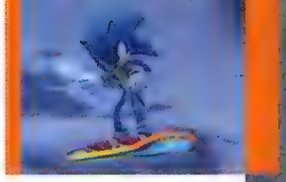
"For the most part the game is fine, once you've adjusted to Sonic being absurdly twitchy"

"While Sonic has so many appealing aspects, it's let down by a long series of small faults that will get under the skin of anyone attempting to play"

CONTINUATION //

stages and the ingenious level design lends itself to enjoyment, while the game allows it, and the sheer vastness of the title is certainly impressive with its many, many stages that require conquering and the usual time-trial/ring collection possibilities.

Shortness has never really been an issue for *Sonic* titles. This is especially the case over the last few years. Love 'em or hate 'em, the new characters that have been introduced have all had secret/unlockable levels that take place alongside Sonic's main quest and this most recent title is no different. There are a few recognisable playable faces in here: Shadow, Tails, Amy, Rouge the strangely attractive bat... they're all in here, but the brand new hairy face, belonging to Silver the hedgehog, is the one you should be most interested in. Don't get us wrong, he's really annoying, but his character introduces a new style of gameplay that differs greatly from the usual speed and flying antics.



Profile

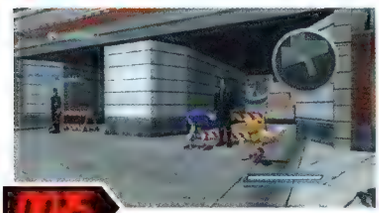
DRIVE BY

Despite being as fast as Sonic, there are times when hedgehog Shadow needs to use a jeep to get around a level. There are a few bonuses to this: first of all, jeeps come with rocket launchers [redacted] and, second of all, [redacted] when he's reversing.

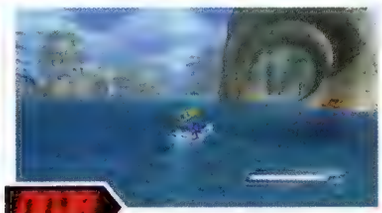
FIRST LEVEL TIMEWATCH

No apologies or regrets for this: Sonic has a whale of a time.

It's a pleasant enough start for Sonic as he takes on sandy beaches and blue skies, however, Eggman's minions and some sea mammals are out to make things difficult.



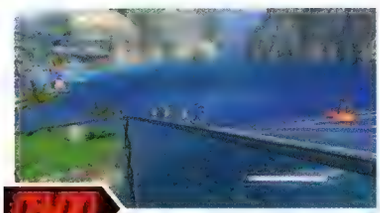
00:15 You've watched plenty of cut-scenes and seen lots of loading - now's you chance to explore the town a little before heading to the first stage.



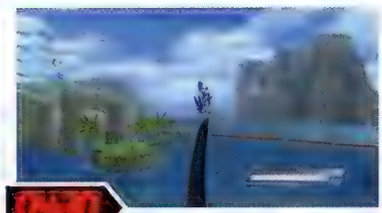
00:18 You've finally made it to an area that you can run fast in. Loop-the-loops and speed panels lay ahead and everything looks pretty.

00:20 You've probably jumped/been forced into nothingness and lost a life by now. The realisation that patience is going to be needed has started to set in.

00:25 The controls are easier now as you get used to the sensitivity a little. Accuracy still proves a problem, though, and death is still happening quite a lot.

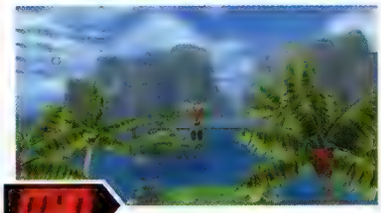


03:00 ...There is fun also - in the form of discovering new routes at speed - so the game is still looking promising.



04:30 Nostalgia kicks in as a killer whale destroys the bridge you're on. In a desperate attempt, you cling to its waggling fin.

05:20 You're still clinging. It takes an unnaturally long time for you to call to your comrade Tails to "close the gate."



07:40 Now you control Miles 'Tails' Prower as you search desperately for something that looks like a switch. Eventually the switch is found and you discover it doesn't look like a switch at all.

SUMMARY: IT'S CLASSIC SONIC. IT EVEN HAS A KILLER WHALE. IT'S JUST A SHAME THAT THE FEW TIMES YOU'RE ACTUALLY IN CONTROL ARE TOO HARD TO CONTROL.

For various reasons that the really long cut-scenes explained to us in great detail, Silver is a telekinetic 'hog' that's out to save the world, and he's got a whole load of powers to aid him with his task. Those unfamiliar with telekinesis should know that it's one of the best skills you can have. Certainly in Silver's case. You can fly, hurl crates around as weapons, and stop a Sonic the hedgehog in mid-air, steal all his rings, and kill him so many times it would cause anyone playing as him to whimper, should they stumble into a boss fight. As previously mentioned, the different style of play is actually quite refreshing and Silver's powers are put good use in some very inventive ways. However, these stages are also plagued by the unpredictable ends and with his areas being far more difficult to traverse than Sonic's, repeating a bout of turtle hopping for the nth occasion isn't really very appealing.

While *Sonic* has so many appealing aspects, it's let down by a long series of small faults that will get under the skin of anyone attempting to play the game. It's a good effort, but we still remain unconvinced as to whether a *Sonic* title, and the speed and control necessary to get it right, is even possible in 3D. Sega is getting ever closer, though, and that's promising.

Although it's difficult to recommend, *Sonic The Hedgehog* should be played just in case you are one of the few people who can see past the errors and enjoy the good points. After all, there are very few decent platform games on the way for the PlayStation 3 and for simple pleasures it's a genre that can't be beaten. Maybe try a rental, eh?

Rick Porter

next verdict

OVERALL COMMENT

There are plenty of good ideas here, but just too many annoyances to really recommend *Sonic*. If you have lots of patience then you're likely to enjoy it - everyone else will get frustrated.

05 OUT OF 10

REMEMBER WHEN THIS WAS THE MOST COMPLICATED THING IN YOUR LIFE?

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO CLASSIC GAMES

- → THE UK'S ONLY MAGAZINE DEDICATED TO THE HALCYON DAYS OF GAMING
- → HUGE GUIDE TO CLASSIC HARDWARE AND GAMES
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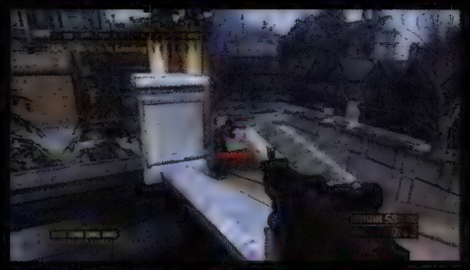

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"For a little over eight quid, you're getting the best Tekken title ever created"

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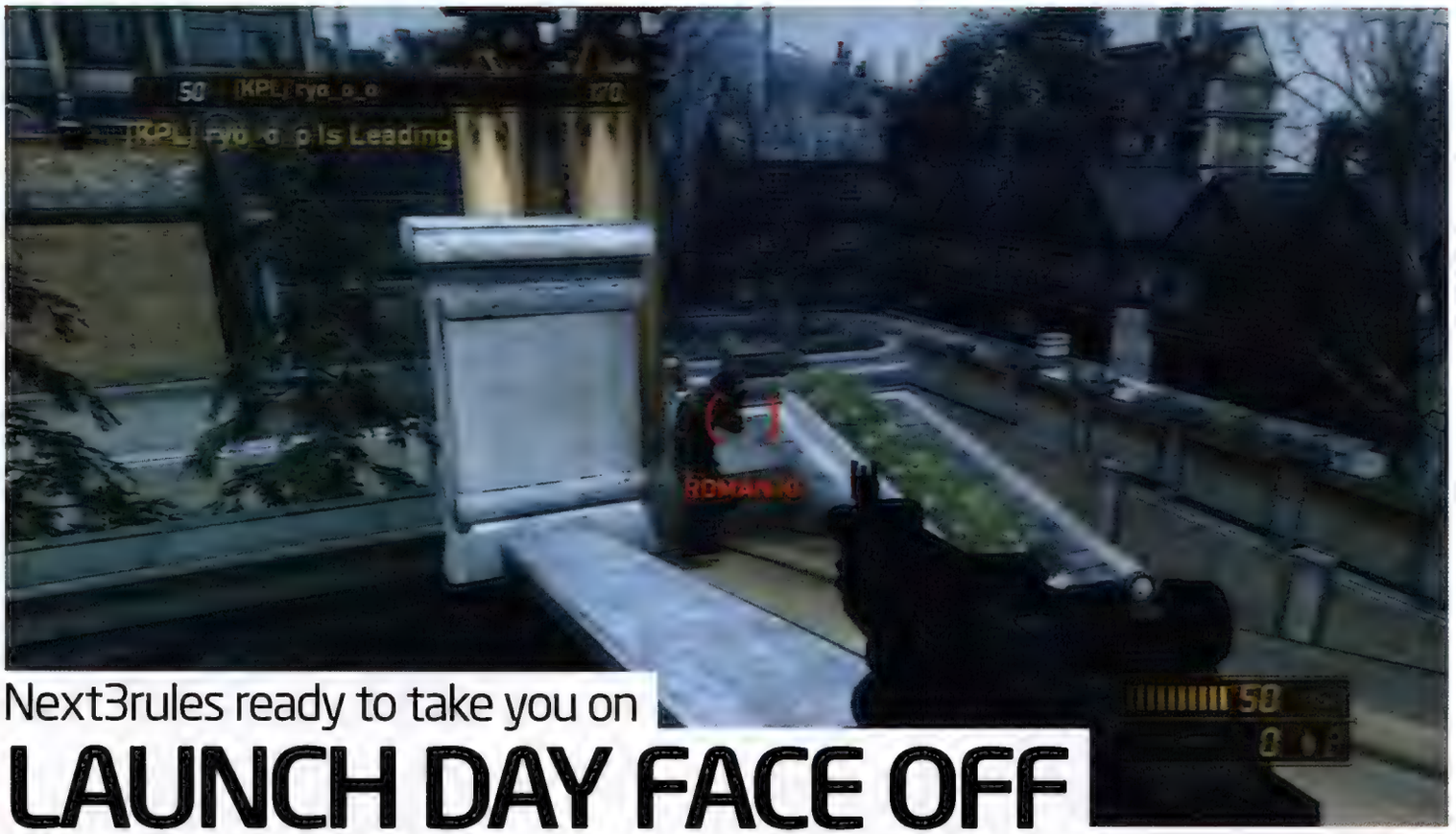


Next3rules ready to take you on

LAUNCH DAY FACE OFF

WE may not know when launch day is exactly, but we're going to be right at the forefront of the online experience with a special launch game-a-thon. Come launch day we'll be online for the full working day and beyond, setting up lobbies, games and offering clan invites to anyone worthy of joining us. We'll obviously be getting on with *Resistance* to start with, and you can pretty much guarantee a jam-packed lobby spread over the range of maps. We'll be delivering a set for beginners that will cover all the maps and the modes to give you an idea of which options you might prefer. We would recommend hooking your PS3 up with a keyboard, as we'll be having more than a few lobby debates in between rounds too.

We'll follow that up with *Ridge Racer* where you can swap your futuristic weapons for slightly dull racing cars. There's a fair chance we won't be sticking around for too long here before shuffling on to *Call Of Duty* where the American military faithful will be cocking their rifles, ready to pump us full of lead. A few dozen respawns later and we'll be heading on to another Sony launch title recently confirmed – thankfully – for online play, namely *MotorStorm*. By that time we'll more than likely be wanting our beds, as will you, after a hard day's (and night's) gaming no doubt. Burn the name Next3rules into your mind, as you'll be seeing it a lot, in conjunction with the words "you were killed by".

Once the launch dates have been confirmed, we're guessing around the end of March is a safe bet, we'll be keeping you up to date with the regular online meets via our website at www.next3.co.uk.

BLU-RAY GOES PORTABLE

Bishop preaches all things Blu-ray

IN this year's Consumer Electronics Show, David Bishop, head of Sony's Home Entertainment Unit hinted at the possibility of portable files included with Blu-rays that can be transferred without downloads. Essentially, what this means is that in order to make the most of the gigantic amount of space on a Blu-ray, Sony will include files that can be taken from the disc and dumped onto the PSP or laptop with the minimal hassle, saving us the bother of having to buy films on two formats. In theory this could be extended to games as well, and increase the interactivity between the PS3 and PSP. Bishop hinted at a launch this year, mentioning that it wasn't a concrete plan to roll out the initiative, but we'd rather see Sony perfect this by the time Blu-ray is better established rather than fudging together a system that doesn't work to its highest potential.

HIGH DEF SOLUTION SOLVED

Blu-ray versus HD-DVD rendered moot

A brand new hybrid movie player has been shown at this year's Consumer Electronics show by LG. The BH100 player, costing around $1200, looks set to end the silly format war between Toshiba and Sony – or at very least for this generation. With two models on show, namely the BH100 player and GGW-H10N drive, the announcement that LG were to reveal a hybrid player was greeted with a degree of skepticism after a host of abortive attempts by the consumer electronics giant to deliver on previous promises.

However, the BH100 Super Multi Blue player suffers from numerous issues, not least of which the inability to play old-fashioned CDs; while the rewriter version, the GGW-H10N Super Multi Blue drive, which (rather strangely) retails at the same price, resolves many of the problems with the player.

At over fifty times the price of the current generation's video media players, there's a fairly sizable question mark over the viability for anyone other than the earliest of early adopters to purchase one.

Warner is looking to produce a hybrid drive too, and wants to include DVD playback on their HD-DVDs to make the format more appealing to anyone looking to upgrade. What is interesting about the hybrid drive is that licences are paid by manufacturers to both Toshiba and Sony instead of just one. This will no doubt raise the price of such units beyond most's reach for some time.

NEXT-GEN CINEMA?

CES shows personal cinema system

YEAH, yeah, stop laughing. Sure, a quick glance at these shots of Headplay's new personal cinema system is bound to elicit a few giggles, but we've been assured by McLaughlin Consulting Group that the head-mounted display market is set to increase to a healthy 1.2 billion dollars by the year 2009. Of course we don't believe that, but the idea of a virtual 52 inch 1024x768 resolution screen strapped to your head could make for some interesting, not to mention compact, ocular delight. Having been announced and shown at this year's Consumer Electronics Show, this one is at the top end of the market, costing around £500, and if Headplay are to be believed, it will lead a powerful surge in the market. We won't hold our breath then, eh?

BEST BLU-RAY PLAYER

The Descent: not just rubbish, but broken too

The Descent, a follow-up to *Dog Soldiers* has been the cause of some annoyance for folk who've forked out for a Sony or Pioneer Blu-ray player, due to the fact that the recently released Blu-ray disc doesn't work. The glitch is caused by the picture-in-picture technology used with the commentary feature, and will work on any other Blu-ray player, including the PS3. Sony has promised to fix the issue later on in the year, while Pioneer is yet to announce a patch.

KAZUNORI ON THE ROAD

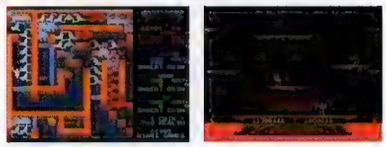
Polyphony Chief on power list

One-stop motor info shop, Motor Trend, has awarded Polyphony Boss Kazunori Yamauchi a place in its power list. Working his way into the list at number 29, Kaz has jumped ahead of some pretty important folk in the motoring industry, such as the CEOs of both Ferrari and Honda. The placement is down to the work he's put into the real diving simulator, *Gran Turismo* over the years, which has led to a boost in sales of import motors in both the US and Japan.

MOTORSTORM ONLINE IN EUROPE!

Muddy racer gets second chance

Thank God! *MotorStorm* is online. Unlike the Japanese version that was without any kind of multiplayer, this new screen reveals that there will be up to 15 players in each race, and the player labelling means your online moniker will be easily visible throughout. It also shows that you'll be able to pitch any type of vehicle up against another, so expect lots of big rig/motorbike face offs.



PS3 IN RETRO ARCADE SHOCKER!

Midway classics to hit PS Store

SONY Online Entertainment has licensed a batch of Midway's classic titles for release on the PS3's PlayStation Store to bolster the already-swollen ranks of arcade downloads appearing on the site. Amongst the titles up for release are Midway's seminal gore-'em-up, *Mortal Kombat II*, the multiplayer arcade favourite, *Gauntlet II* and one of the best buddy games around: *Rampage World Tour*. *Championship Sprint*, *Joust* and *Rampart* have also been announced in a move that outdoes the array of Midway titles on Xbox Live, signalling a good deal of support from third-party publishers, even at this early stage of the PS3's life. Their distribution should be well underway by the time of tne European launch and, given the price of what's already on the online mini-mall, shouldn't cost more than a fiver each. With such awesome multiplayer titles already on the cards, it looks like the PS3's online network will be buzzing with activity come March.

Blu movies

YOUR NEXT GENERATION MOVIE GUIDE BIBLE

Rating guide

ESSENTIAL	★★★★★
ROCKING	★★★★
GOOD	★★★
BARGAIN BIN	★★
BIN FODDER	★

Director// Eli Roth **Cast**// Jay Hernandez, Derek Richardson, Rick Hoffman **Price**// $29.99

An absolute horror in high definition

HOSTEL

ABOUT//

Given our near-ridiculous exposure to Eighties action flicks at a very young age, it's unlikely that we'll ever squirm in front of a screen again. That's not to say, however, that we can't be offended by a film, something proven by Eli Roth's follow-up to the so-so *Cabin Fever*, *Hostel*.

We're not offended in a manner you might expect though, as blood by the gallon and scenes of gratuitous torture are ultimately just signs of an immature, over-excited director, and we've long since stopped caring about those. No, what we found most offensive was the unbelievably xenophobic view of 'Europe' as this haven for liberal sin and weird folk. Quite how a Dutch person could watch the opening scene and not be personally afflicted, we don't know. Still, what do you expect from a director who thinks that seeing a young lady's eye be blowtorched is thrilling?

Given the conventions of the genre we can forgive the schlock nature of the plot that sees three jock tourists end up in torture chambers after being lured there by some big-bosomed sirens. What's far less forgivable is its execution, the lack of any real characterisation ensuring ambivalence by the time the inevitable escape and revenge segment rolls around.

The much-hyped torture and horror scenes are equally lame, with such an obvious lack of craftsmanship from the director hindering any chance of suspense or terror. In short, it fails even at such base levels to be entertaining.

Of course, it's easy to be vitriolic about something so outrageous, but please don't see this as a reflection of our conservatism; *Hostel* is a horrible film, sinisterly composed to induce responses like this so as to appeal to the more rebellious members of the audience. In that respect, we suppose, *Hostel* is a well-made, awful film. ★

PICTURE QUALITY

If one good thing can be said about *Hostel* it's that the thick textures and dark colours work particularly well on BD. Before we reach the richly decorated torture chambers of the second and third acts, it's fairly bland territory it must be said, but once we're into the grotesque grime that sold so many ticket stubs, it's clear that horror movies that spill blood by the ton have a nice new home on Blu-ray. Some colour brightness issues aside, this is really a strong transfer and sets a standard for the genre. Leaves us very excited about the Tarantino/Rodriguez *Grindhouse* project. ★★★★

BEST BD SCENE

The escape from the torture chamber.

Director// Antoine Fuqua
Cast// Bruce Willis, Monica Bellucci, Chad Smith **Price**// $27.99

TEARS OF THE SUN

John McClane gets serious in the jungle

ABOUT//

Though it failed to light up the box office as it deserved to, 1999's *Three Kings* did at least pave the way for the more low-key war movie. However, if this means we have to suffer an increase in Bruce Willis-vehicles like *Tears Of The Sun*, then we'd rather it hadn't.

It's not that Fuqua's *Tears* is unbearable, just that this sort of heavy-handed moral politics and uninspired story makes us loathe Hollywood's tendency to patronise and simplify more than anything else. Forgetting for a moment that the tale of a band of soldiers forced to escort a group of Nigerians away from their oppressing army is remarkably similar to the story in the above-mentioned David O Russell movie, there's such a lack of style and panache or indeed anything to make it stand out, it's a struggle to even remember seeing it 24 hours on.

As is often the case though, there are enough well-shot bullets and loud-enough bangs to stop this from being a wholly miserable affair. Indeed, viewed as just another action movie, we'd even go so far as to say it was okay. ★★

PICTURE QUALITY

If transfers of this quality keep on coming we're just going to have to get used to saying nice things about films we don't really like. The light, the texture, the colour, and the solid effects are all done huge favours in true high definition. ★★★★

BEST BD SCENE

The final showdown between the Americans and their pursuers.

Director// Clark Johnson **Cast**// Colin Farrell, Samuel L. Jackson, LL Cool J **Price**// $25.99

S.W.A.T

Another TV remake, another mediocre film

ABOUT//

Like him or lump him, Michael Mann clearly has the monopoly on realistic action cinema, if that's not too much of a contradiction in terms. One of the ways he has accomplished this is through a reluctance to compromise with the demands of the more typical blockbuster ie: silly plots, showy effects and MTV glamour. There's no such reluctance with Clark Johnson's *SWAT*.

Feeling, for the most part, like a diluted, teen-friendly *Miami Vice*, *SWAT* is an often-awkward mixture of popstars and guns, desperate to be both hip and square. The trash dialogue and pouting actors don't do much to help matters either, with all three elements failing to ever lift one scene above the mediocre mark. However, the well-engineered shootouts and serviceable plot that surrounds a *SWAT* team escorting a drugs baron who is intent on making it difficult for them, stop this from being a complete misfire. ★★

PICTURE QUALITY

We must say, the bright, over-lit nature of these popcorn movies really does give the Blu-ray format much more to work with. That said; there's a slight grainy quality to *SWAT* and we can't help but feel that the lack of swish cinematography is a misjudgement on the director's behalf. ★★★

BEST BD SCENE

The first rescue attempt on the team's prisoner.

ABOUT// It's often easy to carried away expressing your slight disagreements with a director's choices, so much so in fact that you can forget to account for a film's virtues, and in *Million Dollar Baby*'s case, there are many.

Efficiently telling the tale of a young lady looking for a purpose and finding it in a boxing gym and the moving, tragic relationship with her reluctant trainer that follows, Eastwood's Oscar-winning film is as sound a drama to come out of Hollywood in a while. Complemented with fine performances and dealing with some difficult issues in surprising, affecting ways, *Million Dollar Baby* is further evidence – if any were needed – that Eastwood is definitely a growing force in cinema.

But the fact remains that *Baby* is only ever a very simple, straightforward film that lacks any really outstanding element that might elevate to the standard of something like Marc Forster's *Finding Neverland*, which the film beat to the Best Picture Oscar in 2005. There are also some odd caricatures that appear late on in the film, undermining what is otherwise a sophisticated, well-measured piece from a director curiously approaching his peak at the age of 76. ★★★★

Director// Clint Eastwood **Cast**// Hilary Swank, Clint Eastwood, Morgan Freeman **Price**// $27.99

MILLION DOLLAR BABY

It's Sophie's Choice meets Girlfight

PICTURE QUALITY

The cool colours of the cinematography work wonderfully well with the format, helped dramatically by an extremely crisp transfer. Those wrinkles in Eastwood's mug have never been as impressive as they are here either, and were it not for a slight drop in quality during the darker scenes, we'd be adding another star. ★★★★

BEST BD SCENE

The tragic, final bout of fisticuffs.

Director// Scott Derrickson **Cast**// Laura Linney, Tom Wilkinson, Campbell Scott **Price**// $29.99

THE EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE

Based on a true story that wasn't interesting

ABOUT// After the recent saturation of *Scream*-lite slasher flicks and horror remakes, audiences have been crying out for a more sophisticated scare, but this isn't it.

Though it tries hard to mix relevant debate and popcorn frights with its story of the priest put on trial for exorcising a now-dead teen, *The Exorcism Of Emily Rose* consistently fails to impress with either element. Shallow when it wants to be deep, clichéd when it needs to be surprising, the film never comes close to matching the quality of its obvious inspiration. That said, it's a step in the right direction, albeit a clumsy one. ★

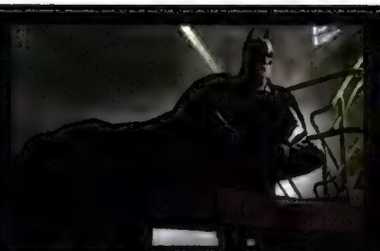
PICTURE QUALITY

Because of the general lack of panache of the film and its rather-muted palette, *Exorcism*'s high-definition transfer leaves a bit to be desired. Solid, but nevertheless uninspired. ★★★★

BEST BD SCENE

Any one of the supernatural flashbacks.

COMING SOON...



BATMAN BEGINS
1 This should be great on the next-gen disc.

FLYBOYS
2 A brand-spanking new war film about pilots, obviously.

FIRST BLOOD
3 Excellent post-Nam action flick. Go Sly!

BROKEN ARROW
4 Travolta and Slater Woo us with this nuke actioner.

TALLADEGA NIGHTS: THE BALLAD OF RICKY BOBBY
5 From the makers of *Anchorman*. Nuff said, surely?

ALIEN VS PREDATOR
6 Absolute crap in high-definition. What a treat.

GLORY
7 One of the best war movies finds a new home on BD.

AMERICAN PSYCHO
8 The blackest of comedies in the highest definition.

THE MATRIX
9 It is, of course, the one we're all waiting for.

UNFORGIVEN
10 Another Clint western takes advantage of BD.

BECAUSE **WE CARE** ABOUT THE LITTLE FORMAT TOO

DVD round-up

Rating guide

ESSENTIAL ★★★★★
ROCKING ★★★★
GOOD ★★★
BARGAIN BIN ★★
BIN FODDER ★

Director// Kevin Smith **Cast**// Brian O'Halloran, Jeff Anderson, Rosario Dawson **Price**// £19.99 **Out**// 19 February 2007

CLERKS 2

Sticking meat in your buns

ABOUT// *Clerks II*'s biggest problem is that it feels too much like a movie. The original, released over a decade ago, had the bizarre benefit of Smith's inexperience with film. It felt like one strange vignette after another, with witty banter running through it all.

Smith has grown as a filmmaker since then, making *Clerks II* his most technically and structurally sound film yet. But it's to the detriment of the characters he dreamed up in the first film. By sticking them in a more traditional three-act structure he negates that raw vivacity we witnessed in the original. Randall is probably the best example: abrasive but endearing in *Clerks*, now he's just bitter and nasty.

But it's there to set up an arc and support the main theme of the film – just like the lame and blatantly telegraphed love story involving Rosario Dawson. She's fine but Smith puts too much faith in O'Halloran to carry the film and the man's limited acting ability isn't up to the task. He's also stuffed too many cringeworthy scenes in here. The kind that plagued *Jersey Girl*.

Despite these things, *Clerks II* is well worth seeing, thanks to how funny it is. It has some of the best humour Smith's put to film, including a Jay and Silent Bob reference to *Silence Of The Lambs* and the fabled Donkey sex show gag. Despite its problems, Smith hasn't tainted the original. *Clerks II* isn't a disaster, but it could have been if it wasn't as funny as it is. ★★★

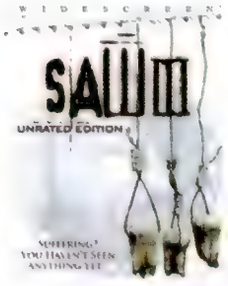
EXTRAS

90-minute behind-the-scenes documentary, various deleted scenes, cast and crew audio commentary and the famous 1000 Myspace credits list. ★★★★

Price// £19.99 **Out**// 26 February 2007

SAW III

Up to snuff



ABOUT// *Saw III* is a snuff film in disguise. Characters with zero depth are killed and we therefore care very little. It's one grisly set piece after another. Despite that, *Saw III* is easily the best in the franchise – with several genuinely excellent scenes (including makeshift open-brain surgery). Unfortunately, it's still plagued by horrible acting and ADD editing, but it's worth it for the thrills. ★★★

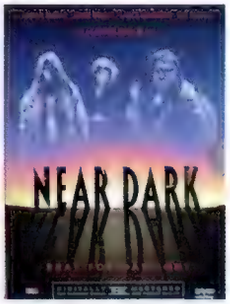
EXTRAS

★★★

Price// £19.99 **Out**// 12 February 2007

NEAR DARK

Near-definite purchase



ABOUT// Kathryn Bigelow and Eric Red's modern day western with vampires is easily one of the best films of the Eighties. Blending romance, drama and horror with the feeling of a thriller, *Near Dark* still works a charm twenty years after its original release. It only really suffers for its abrupt and, frankly, cop-out ending, but don't let that dissuade you: this really is a classic. ★★★★

EXTRAS

★★★★

Price// £19.99 **Out**// Now

CLICK

Bruce Alclicky

ABOUT// Imagine *Click* as *Bruce Almighty* with a remote control instead of God's power, but don't let that put you off: this is the best Adam Sandler comedy in years. While the film has all the ingredients to suck, *Click* manages to avoid doing so with copious genuine laugh-out-loud moments and some surprisingly real drama. It also has the best doggy sex sight gag in film history. Absolutely recommended. ★★★★

EXTRAS

★★★★

IN STORE

Now available to download from the PlayStation Store

The PS3 gets a good iron fisting

TEKKEN: DARK RESURRECTION

Developer Namco Bandai
Type Full Game
Players 1-2
Size 829 MB
Cost 125 HKD (£8.23)
Region Japan, Hong Kong
Availability Out now

YOU probably haven't played a *Tekken* title in a while. Indeed, apart from a very brief session with *Dark Resurrection* on the PSP, it's been a good couple of years since anyone bothered with the aging beat-'em-up in any serious sense. It's been eclipsed by numerous titles in numerous ways over the years, even its stablemate *Soul Calibur* managed to outdo it in terms of innovation and quality last time around with an RPG mode that, despite being slightly tiresome, managed to inject a much-needed spice to the formula. It's a barren future for *Tekken* if Namco fail to do something really special with the sixth iteration. Yes, as much as we adore the *Tekken* franchise, it's difficult to believe that *Tekken 6* will be anything more than a visually enhanced adaptation of older versions. That's not the point though, we'll leave the discussion of *Tekken 6* to another time. What we're talking about is the downloadable PSP smash, *Dark Resurrection*. On the PS3, no less.

For a little over eight quid, you're getting the best *Tekken* title ever created. It's *that* simple. Sure, it's not quite as advanced as the same game on the PSP, but leaving out the variety of modes, everything else is near perfect, with the small exception of some slightly odd collision detection when you get towards the perimeter of the arenas. It's the tiny glitches like this that bring home just what incredible value for money you're getting with this download. Over thirty characters have been included in the mix, which is quite something considering the variation that's been given to each character. No longer are there any Roger/King Wang/Michelle or Nina/Anna similarities. While every character has been included (with the possible exception of Gon, Devil, P Jack and Doctor B), each has seen the right end of enough work to ensure a significantly different experience had in previous games. Conversely, some characters have been left almost untouched, particularly the more popular ones such as Law, Paul, Jin, Kazuya, Heihachi and Hwoarang. So there's plenty of variation for the veterans of the series to have to learn a few new bits, but not too much to render it unassailable to noobs, or those returning after a few years away.

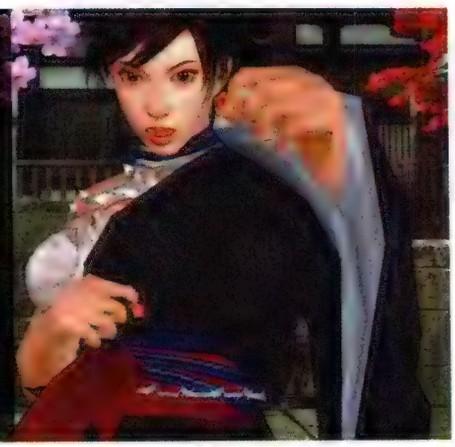
Just to dispel any myths, *Tekken: Dark Resurrection* isn't *Tekken 6*.

"For a little over eight quid, you're getting the best Tekken title ever created"

HOW TO DOWNLOAD DARK RESURRECITON

Not living on the orient? Let us help

01 - Open another master account on your PS3 with Hong Kong as your region.
02 - Input your card details as normal, but input Hong Kong as your billing address.
03 - Once the account has been created, select add new funds' and add 40 HKD. Add another 40 HKD. Remember not to add any more than 40HKD at any one time as this will lead to Sony attempting to validate your address. This is bad.
04 - Now you have 80HKD, but you'll need 125, so when you select *Tekken:DR* to download, it suggests that you add an extra 45 HKD. Do so and wait for the 829 MB file to download.
05 - Go to games in the XMB and select *Tekken: DR*. Easy.



Balance was, is and always has been an issue with *Tekken*, especially if you want to ask the *Virtua Fighter* fans out there. Rivalries aside, there doesn't seem to have been a concerted effort on Namco's part to lower the destructive clout of many of the more-powerful characters. However, *Tekken*'s never been the most hardcore of titles, so this weighting will only be obvious to those stupidly well versed with the series. We're trying to find things wrong here, but the fact remains that it's more than enough of a stop-gap to keep you *Tekken*ed up until number six hits. Granted, you're getting a slightly inferior game in terms of one or two less modes, but it's possible that many will find it far more rewarding than anything else on the console so far. Excellent work Sony. In offering this fighter for next to nothing you've made folk aware of your commitment to the PlayStation Store. Something that really needed to be done.

NEW KIDS ON THE BLOCK

The lowdown on the two new fighters

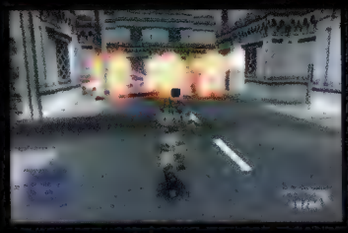
Otherwise known as 'The White God of Death', Dragunov was sent to uncover some great power hidden beneath Japan. His fighting style is almost as odd as his storyline with a bizarre mix of strike-to-grapple moves and counter-hit opening combos, namely sambo wrestling. Mild-mannered Lili on the other hand is out to please her father, an oil magnate residing in Monaco, by any means possible. She believes that by winning King Of Iron Fist, she can create a bridge between Mishima Corp and her father's oil company. We never said any of this made sense, did we? Lili uses an athletic street fighting style and is surprisingly powerful for a female character, making her the most useful of the two new guys.

next[3] verdict

OVERALL COMMENT ★★★★★

We're sure this'll be one of the best value downloads you'll ever encounter. Even if you're not a *Tekken* fan, the budget price makes it a hugely attractive prospect. Get it now.

//TOP PSONE-PSP DOWNLOADS



SYPHON FILTER

//**Available** Now //**File Size** 385MB
//**Region** US //**Type** Full PSone game
//**Cost** $5.99 (£3.00)

One of the best tiles on the PSone, but coming late on in the life of the platform didn't receive nearly as much acclaim as it perhaps should have. Buy it, play it, love it and wait for the other two good games on the PS Store. ★★★★★

TEKKEN 2

//**Available** Now //**File Size** 535MB
//**Region** US //**Type** Full PSone game
//**Cost** $5.99 (£3.00)

The best fighter of the PSone until *Soul Calibur* came along, *Tekken 2* is still seen by many as the pinnacle of the series in terms of simple beauty and elegance. ★★★★★

R-TYPES

//**Available** Now //**File Size** 280MB
//**Region** Japan //**Type** Full PSone game
//**Cost** ¥525 (£2.22)

A firm favourite since time began, it's only fitting that one of the first downloads for the PSP should be the compilation of R-type and R-type II, R-types. ★★★★½

HOT SHOTS GOLF 2

//**Available** Now //**File Size** 157MB
//**Region** US //**Type** Full PSone game
//**Cost** $5.99 (£3.00)

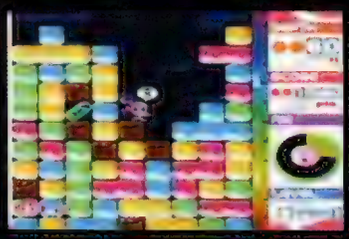
Every bit as good as any contemporary PSP title, (including the great *Tiger Woods*) *Hot Shots Golf 2* has to be worth a pop at a mere $5.99. It'll keep you and your PSP in gaming for some time. Guaranteed. ★★★★½

//TOP PSONE-PSP DOWNLOADS CONTD

DINO CRISIS

//**Available** Now //**File Size** 260MB
//**Region** Japan //**Type** Full PSone game
//**Cost** ¥525 (£2.22)

Resident Evil with dinosaurs, this classic was one of the PSone's biggest hits amongst Capcom lovers. With three different endings to this story-driven survival horror, you'll get a fair bit of play out of it. ★★★★☆



MR DRILLER

//**Available** Now //**File Size** 200MB
//**Region** Japan //**Type** Full PSone game
//**Cost** ¥525 (£2.22)

Classic block-puzzling fun from the Japanese store, *Mr. Driller* may be basic, but it'll fit the PSP perfectly, and pretty much negate the need for another puzzler on the handheld. ★★★☆☆

COOL BOARDERS

//**Available** Now //**File Size** 283MB
//**Region** US //**Type** Full PSone game
//**Cost** $5.99 (£3.00)

Cool Boarders' then-unique gnarly snowboarding experience has been surpassed by numerous titles over the years, so it's perhaps not for those looking for anything other than a hefty nostalgia hit. ★★★☆☆

CRASH BANDICOOT

//**Available** Now //**File Size** 469MB
//**Region** US //**Type** Full PSone game
//**Cost** $5.99 (£3.00)

The original, and in our opinion, best of the series; this is the kind of stuff that appeals to every kind of gamer, young and old. Perfect for the PSP, and any other format, actually. ★★★☆☆

Not nearly, but almost

GRAN TURISMO HD

INFO

Developer Digital Polyphony
Type Full Game
Players 1
Size 624 MB
Cost Free
Region US
Availability Out now

WE were going to dedicate two pages to this seminal driving sim. We were fully prepared to lavish days of attention on it – it has, after all, given us much companionship over the years. We were ready to slap five stars on it and sing its praises. We were going to use every idiom relating to quality we know, as well as a few we don't. We were oiling our linguistic workings with superlatives and gearing up for one of the most sycophantic pieces of writing ever created. Then we downloaded it.

It's a little disappointing then, that *GTHD* is a little bit crap. Don't get us wrong, it's free for Christ's sake, and we're never going to argue with that; however, we would have to say that the limited nature of the download makes for some truly uninspired racing action; *Gran Turismo* has aged badly, it seems. On offer with this free hit is a single track: Eiger Nordwand in the Swiss Alps and ten cars ranging from the Suzuki Cappuccino to the mighty Ferrari 599. The range of cars is fine, encompassing most folks' faves such as the Lancer and Skyline, and features tuned versions of each of them, but there's nothing else to hold your interest. There's no tweaking in the classic GT sense, no currency to work with and no multiplayer aspect to give it any longevity. Sure there'll be microtransactions, starter packs and other assorted downloads, but the game as it stands at the moment really isn't what we were expecting.

It's still *Gran Turismo*, indeed it's about as *Gran Turismo* as you'll get, but there's something different to what made it a great game back in the day. We're not entirely sure what that is, but we're pretty sure it has something to do with Sony making money.

"There's something different to what made it a great game back in the day"

MINI MICRO

How you'll be bolstering your garage

At the moment we'd have to say that *GTHD* is a little disappointing. We've given it a score that reflects that, but hopefully, in a few months we'll see a plethora of new cars. The amount of motors isn't a problem with this title though, it's more about the moces and tracks. That said, you do get the new Ferrari 599 as the final unlockable car. Any inclusion of AI (not to mention other cars on the track) and damage modelling would be a huge bonus, and more than possible especially considering Polyphony's plans to include it before it went the microtransaction route.

next3verdict

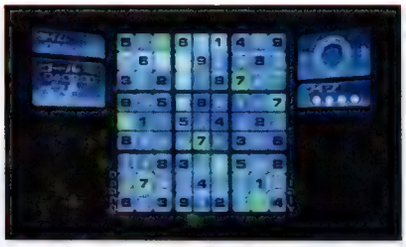
OVERALL COMMENT ★★

GTHD Concept is a shadow of what made *Gran Turismo* such a fantastic series. Important elements like Career Mode and *the actual racing* have been excluded very much to its detriment.

IN STORE
NOW AVAILABLE TO DOWNLOAD FROM THE PLAYSTATION STORE

KAZUO

Sudoku by the numbers



Developer Sumo Games
Type Full Game
Players 1
Size 83MB
Cost ¥525-¥1260 (£2.22-£5.30)
Region Japan
Availability Out now

IT'S strange that a title as straightforward as *Kazuo* should be free in addition to five other pay-to-play versions. There are two reasons for this. First – who doesn't know what Sudoku is all about? Second of all, by giving away a few slices of the pie and filling folk up on freebees, Sony is shooting itself in the foot. This wouldn't normally be the case, but just how much Sudoku will you ever want to buy? We've found that if we need a relaxing break from the stresses and strains of work (and this is the most relaxing Sudoku title we've ever played) this is pretty much all you'll need. Sometimes the backgrounds get in the way a little, and it's hardly the most imaginative of titles, but hey, it's good enough fun for a few quid.

next[13] verdict
OVERALL COMMENT ★★

LEMMINGS

It's all change for the suicidal rodents

YOU don't mess with *Lemmings!* It's one of the most original titles ever conceived, and much like *Worms*, any adjustments have to be carefully implemented for fear of ruining perfection, which means the only things that should change are the levels.

Team 17 has eschewed this logic and, in a rather shocking move, has produced a brilliant rehash of the puzzler, complete with new mechanics. Lighting and cloning are the two you'll encounter with this five-level freebee, both of which add an entirely new dimension to the game. The first four levels are nothing new, but we guarantee you'll be tearing your hair out on the last one. Top stuff.

next[13] verdict
OVERALL COMMENT ★★★★

Developer Team 17
Type Full Game
Players 1
Size 124 MB
Cost $5.99 (£3.00)
Region US
Availability Out now

//TOP 5 MOVIE TRAILERS

BLACK HAWK DOWN
Size 97MB (228MB 1080p)
Region US
★★★★

SILENT HILL
Size 98MB (231MB 1080p)
Region US
★★★★

HOUSE OF FLYING DAGGERS
Size 75MB (178MB 1080p)
Region US
★★★

CLICK
Size 96MB (229MB 1080p)
Region US
★★

UNDERWORLD EVOLUTION
Size 91MB
Region US
★★★

//TOP 5 GAME TRAILERS

LEMMINGS VIDEO - CHEEKY
Size 53MB
Region US
★★★

WARHAWK
Size 53MB
Region US
★★★★

RESISTANCE: FALL OF MAN
Size 59MB
Region US
★★★

MOTORSTORM TRAILER 2
Size 52MB
Region US
★★★★

CASH GUNS CHAOS DLX
Size 189MB
Region US
★★

More like fall of 'Next3rules'

RESISTANCE: FALL OF MAN

INFORM

Publisher Sony
Developer Insomniac Games
Players 40
Online content No
Demo No

PART of this job entails being good at videogames. Even James, our art editor and the forefront of modern male fashion, is good. Given how much time we've spent playing games online throughout our lives, we foolishly figured we had this one pegged. But *Resistance* caught us off guard. *Resistance* was different. Through the Custom Game menu we selected a Team Deathmatch game supporting 31 players on a map called 'Rooftop'. We waited until we spawned into it... and then we died. Repeatedly.

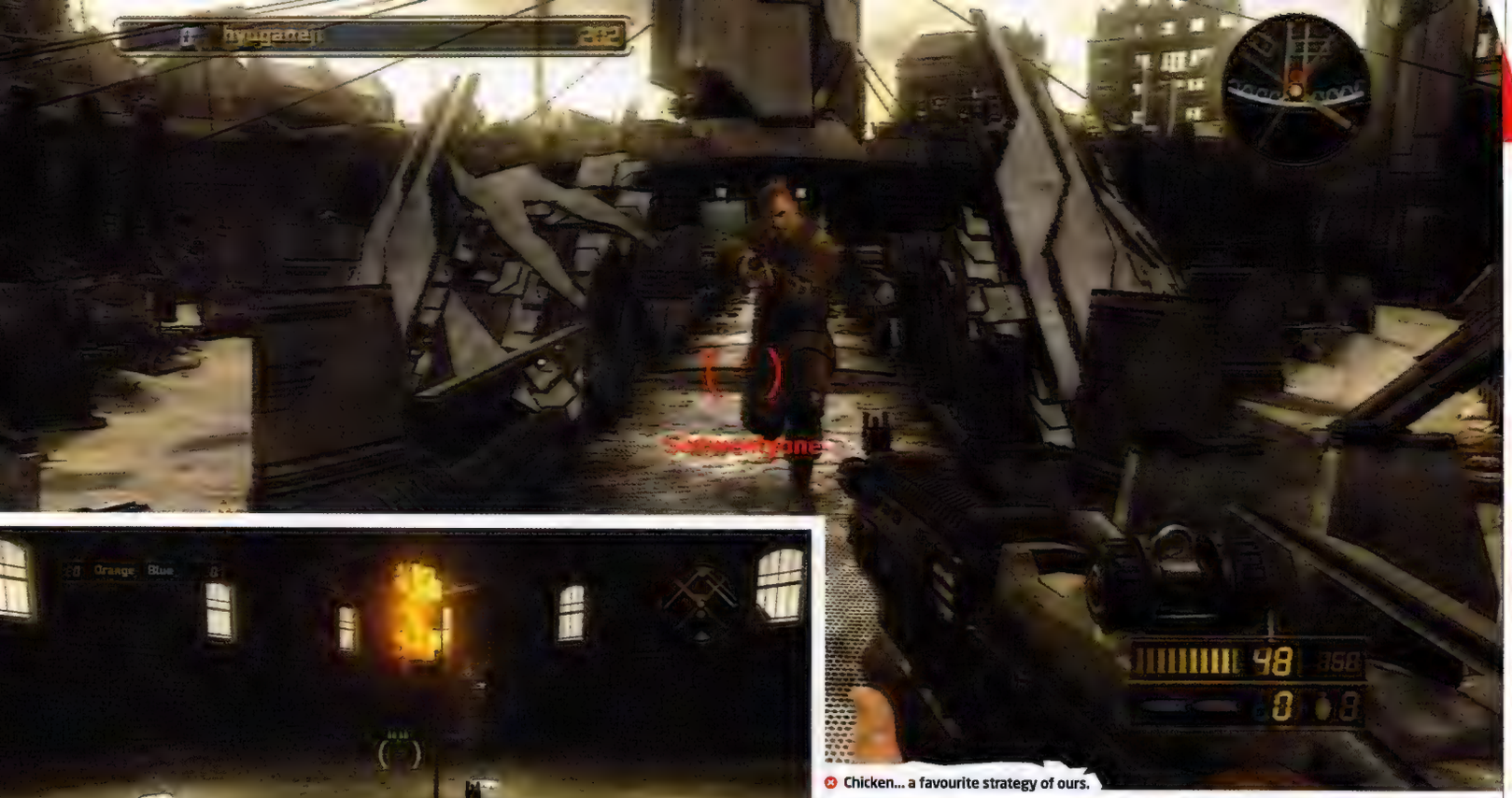
That's not because we were rubbish. We've already established that we aren't. But if there's one word that describes the multiplayer component of *Resistance* more than any other it's this: carnage... and complete and utter carnage at that. The reason we died so much in those early stages was attributed to the game's propensity to respawn players absolutely bloody anywhere in the map: in a room with several enemies, right in the middle of a fire fight on a rooftop, right next to the rocket launcher every player on the map wants. The best strategy we found was to die, respawn into the game and then bunny hop the hell out of there – at least in those initial stages, anyway.

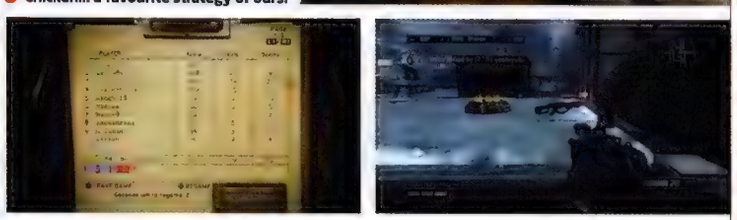
Another factor of our plight was acclimatisation. We knew some aspects of the map because it was based on a level from the single-player game. But we didn't know all the hotspots for weapons and air vents and what all the controls do, as some were tweaked for the multiplayer. For example, when playing as a human character in our first round we shot at the opposing Chimera side. After several shots, fire erupted from the vents on their backs. We figured this was due to our firing, but it wasn't the case; by holding the L2 trigger as a Chimera the screen becomes washed out, players appear cloaked in purple and you move faster. Temporarily. As humans you can run faster, but that's all.

Once acclimatisation was over the real fun started – as did the vast accruement of medals the game awards you for such things as successful headshots, melee-killing enemies and – our favourite – killing more than three enemies at once or consecutively. After spending considerable time in Team Deathmatch we decided to explore the other online modes, which include: Deathmatch, Team Deathmatch, Meltdown, Breach, CTF and Conversion. Conversion is the only mode of play, we found, that didn't appear to be created to hold dozens of players. The other modes usually took place on massive, expansive maps. Meltdown, which sees you trying to accumulate more 'Nodes' than the opposing side proved the least popular game online during our various play through.

POPULARITY
This is currently the most popular game in Sony's PS3 canon and certainly will be when the console launches here next month. Sony is going to shift tons of copies of *Resistance* and that means loads of people are certain to be playing it. You're unlikely to find any dead servers.

"One word that best describes the multiplayer component of Resistance is 'carnage'..."





Chicken... a favourite strategy of ours.

Capture The Flag and Breach weren't exactly flaunting large numbers either.

Breach could certainly rival a game like *Battlefield 2* in terms of the size of its maps. Unfortunately they prove more linear too – with players essentially trying to take over several capture points before assaulting the core of the map. For us, we couldn't make it out of the first spawn point without having our arses handed to us. We soon grew tired of being 'owned' so we joined a new game as the defenders. It was the same scenario yet again – we were just on the better side this time. The problem with Breach is that it requires co-operation. Until people use their headsets Breach will remain as troublesome as it is.

But make no mistake: *Resistance*'s multiplayer on the whole is excellent. Insomniac Games has clearly built on everything it learned producing *Ratchet & Clank: Gladiator* to deliver a premium PS3 online experience. But it isn't perfect. The arbitrary weapon holstering is a bit of a joke to be honest. When you run over a new weapon, rather than a screen indicator telling you that you've done so, the game arbitrarily holsters your current weapon and chooses the newer item. This could mean life or death in situations where you're deep in a firefight and run over a new weapon that a fallen comrade or enemy has dropped. As disappointing as this is, we still take solace in that it's a problem Insomniac Games can easily fix with an update.

With an entertaining single-player and a diverse and fast-paced multiplayer to match, Insomniac is surely going to ship many copies of *Resistance* at launch. So much so that we'd be surprised if this isn't the number one game to play online for some time to come. In fact, the only other game that could rival it is *MotorStorm*, but we're dealing with different genres here. As it is, *Resistance* is excellent online and we can't wait till more people are playing it. We certainly will be, what with our clan and all. See you online.

Loading screens present information about the game you're about to play.

next[3] verdict

OVERALL COMMENT ★★★★

Insomniac has created its multiplayer with an emphasis on fast-paced, run-'n'-gun gameplay set across huge maps catering for dozens of people. It's epic and intense stuff but it isn't perfect. Yet.

What are you expecting?

RIDGE RACER 7

INFORM

Publisher Namco
Developer In-house
Players 14
Online content No
Demo No

AS we mentioned in our review last issue, if you enjoy *Ridge Racer* and aren't too fussed about change, you are likely to enjoy *Ridge Racer 7*. It's more of the same, yet again, but if you dig that you'll no doubt dig Namco's latest. We're going to echo those sentiments with the multiplayer component too, because if you're expecting anything other than more of the same – but with real-life opposition instead of suspect AI – you are likely to be disappointed.

The multiplayer menu exudes all the gloss of the single-player, but features extremely annoying background music that you can't change at all. There's so much gloss in fact – which includes animated backgrounds and loads of on-screen info – that it comes off feeling pleasing to the eye, but a little cluttered too. Multiplayer supports a maximum number of 14 racers and setting up a game or joining an existing one is extremely easy.

You get to choose from several play styles, which include; Just For Fun, Serious Race, Team Race or Pair Race. Once you've selected the play style you prefer and entered a room, you're then free to choose your machine, chat to the other players (albeit from a very limited selection of pre-set phrases), be a spectator in races, change your team, or leave entirely. What's cool here is that the game sticks a nationality flag next to your online pseudonym that lets the other players know where you're from.

Why spend so much time talking about the menu options? Well, once you're actually in the game it's pretty standard *Ridge Racer* fare. All the tracks from the game are available in standard or reverse and they haven't been tweaked in any discernible way at all. You're essentially playing the exact same laps from the single-player – which you may or may not have exhausted. What the multiplayer component obviously offers above all else is the ability to play with people from around the world. In that sense, it really isn't disappointing.

Sure, you get the obvious assholes who forget they're playing *Ridge Racer* and keep trying to get Takedowns on you (COWBOY300766 and Wakasa, to name two in particular). But then you will always get people like this. Like we said in the *Resistance* online review, until people play with microphone headsets, events aren't going to be as good as they can be. The same can be levelled at *Ridge Racer*. Once you can communicate with the other racers, chances are you'll have even more fun.

But for now, playing *Ridge Racer 7* online is a lot like playing it offline. The benefit is that you're playing with real people and therefore become more aware of how good or bad you are based on your performance compared to theirs. *Ridge Racer* was never high art and that's no different here. But it is unquestionably tons of fun. Just be ready for more of the same. A lot more.

POPULARITY

Whether *Ridge Racer 7* will stand the test of time with something like *MotorStorm* on the shelves remains to be seen. They're two different games to be sure, but we have a hunch the latter is going to be much more popular in this country at launch.

next3 verdict

OVERALL COMMENT ★★★

Even when playing with real people, the gameplay dynamics of *Ridge Racer* don't change at all. If you can deal with that then we're sure you'll get a lot of fun out of this online.

Well-told boredom

UNTOLD LEGENDS: DARK KINGDOM

INFORM
Publisher Sony
Developer SOE
Players 4
Online content No
Demo No

HACK, slash, hack, slash, hack, slash and hack and slash your way through the entire single-player game co-operatively with up to four players online. Which may or may not be your bag, depending on whether you find entirely mediocre-at-best action RPGs entertaining or not. Because that's what *Untold Legends* is: mediocre. Thanks to its online component only consisting of co-op, all the dodgy happenings from the offline single-player are present and uncorrected.

That said, even the worst games can offer some enjoyment – no matter how small – through the co-op mode and this is no different. We would recommend playing offline rather than online because it's best to have your friends in the room with you. And some beers. But if you can find three willing, and entirely plastered, friends to play with you online, we are more than sure you'll find some small amount of fun in it.

Looking at *Untold Legends* online is really a case of looking at the single-player and deciding whether or not people will enjoy playing through it again. There are hundreds of various combos to learn but it's a button masher at heart. A really boring and dire one, too. But as we mentioned earlier, even some of the worst games can offer a small glimmer of hope online. In that sense, *Untold Legends* is no different.

next3 verdict

OVERALL COMMENT ★★

On your own this is extremely dire stuff, but with friends we're sure you'll glean some enjoyment (even if it's just laughing at the crap in-game cut-scenes).

Need sated

NEED FOR SPEED: CARBON

THE first thing to note about *Need For Speed: Carbon* online is that it can't be played in the open-world environment, much like the online component of *Most Wanted*. As disappointing as that initially feels, the logistics surely would not do it justice. Instead, EA has stripped the game down to courses only.

Circuit, Sprint, Speedtrap, Pursuit Tag, Pursuit Knockout and Canyon racing/Duel. It's all here. Circuit is obviously the standard race mode, but the real fun emerges, much like in the single-player, when Canyon Dueling. Tearing down a cliff road, close to the edge, trying not to fly off, while at the same time staying ahead of (or behind) your opposition brings very tense moments of play. But they're also extremely entertaining.

Carbon's menus are easy to navigate and very glossy. Rooms you've created or joined – in Ranked or Unranked – will automatically load after ten minutes if people are playing the fool. Playing ranked games will afford you online experience points that you can use to buy new cars, upgrades or visualisations too – so it's a well-rounded package.

Need For Speed: Carbon is much like *Ridge Racer 7* – if you are used to this particular type of play then you will probably love it online. But to everyone else, it might be a little bit hollow and a tad too glossy.

next3 verdict

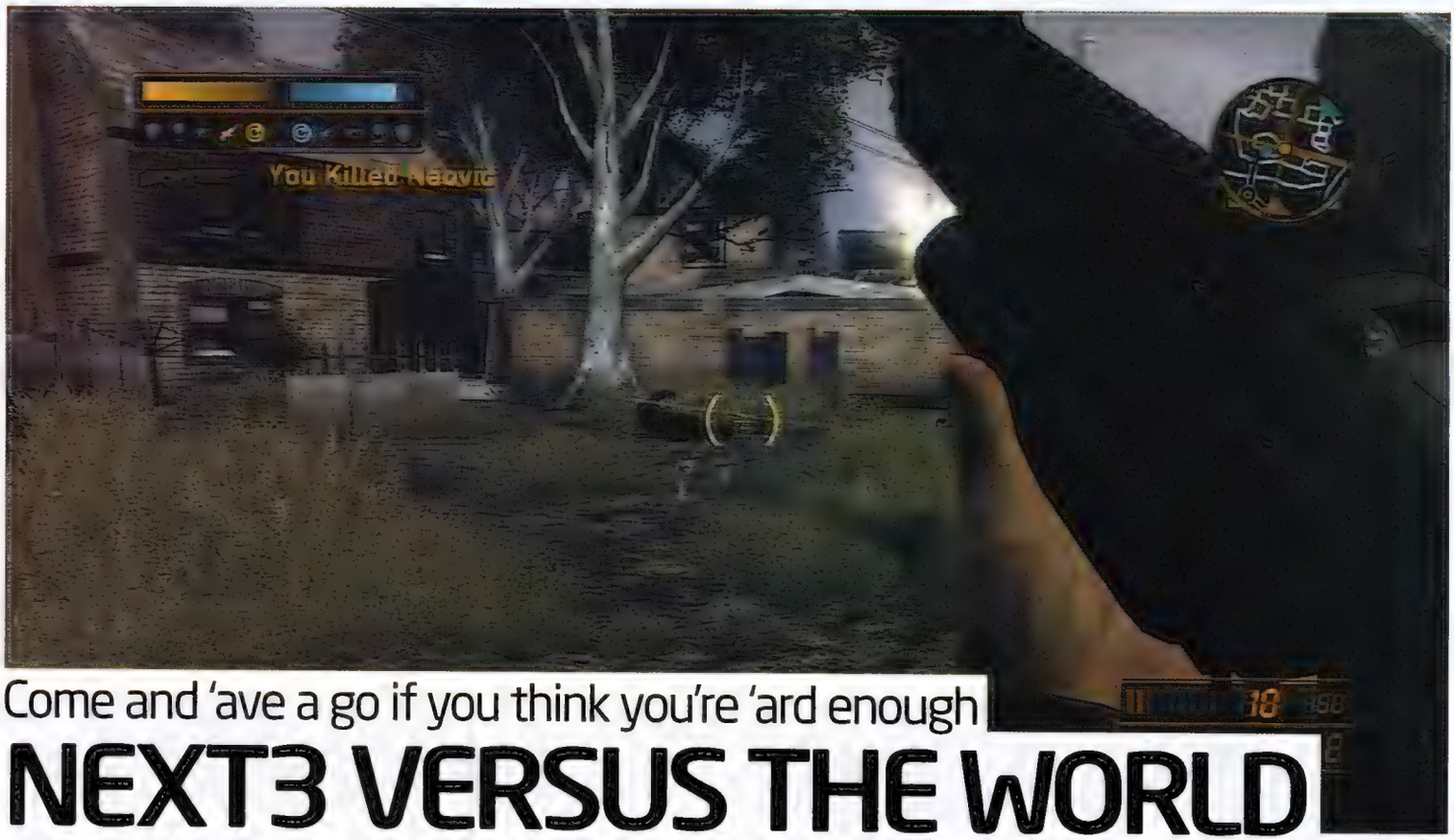
OVERALL COMMENT ★★★

Carbon doesn't offer the most robust racing modes, but at least there's something here for everyone. Canyon Duels steal the show, mind you. At least in our opinion, anyway.

INFORM
Publisher EA
Developer In-house
Players 8
Online content No
Demo No

next3 vs.

TAKE ON THE NEXT3 TEAM AND BEAT US!



Come and 'ave a go if you think you're 'ard enough

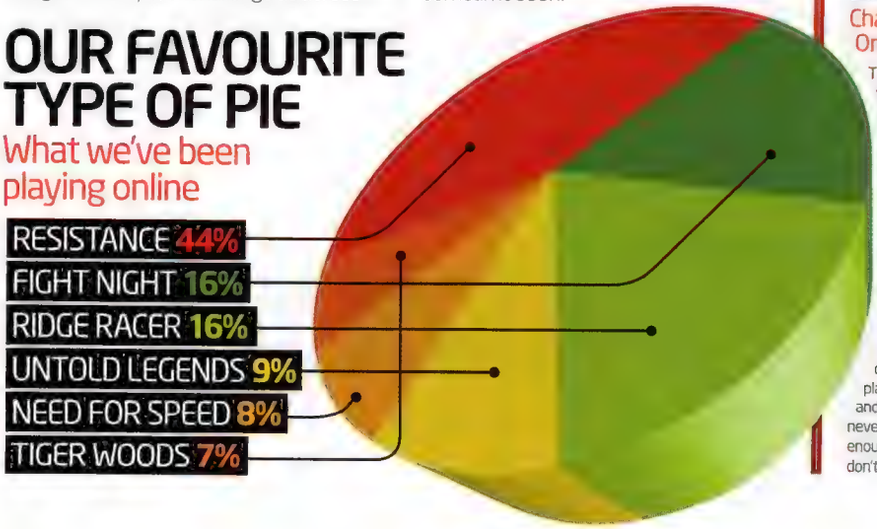
NEXT3 VERSUS THE WORLD

THE online aspect of the PS3 is where it's at. Following the release of the console in the States and Japan, we've been online as much as our thumbs can stand it. There are some titles more popular than others, and in some cases we were the only people online. What this means is that by the time you lot get hold of your shiny black consoles, we'll be well experienced with the ways of the online PS3 gamer. If you want to hook up with us online to team up and get some tips, or challenge us across the internet you'll be able to by jumping on our forum or website, and registering your interest. Easy.

We'll be setting up competitions, reporting on major happenings like clan meets (and especially sizable matches), as well as the top players' movements in the tables and anything else that catches our eye. We'll be around as much as possible, so look out for Next3rules, we'll be blowing your face off in a round of *Resistance* sometime soon.

OUR FAVOURITE TYPE OF PIE

What we've been playing online



TEST YOUR MIGHT!

Challenge Next3 to Online Combat

Think you have what it takes to drop Team Next3 in the hypothetical ring? We're open to invitations to come and kick your collective arses any time you wish – although that depends entirely on how busy we are. Nevertheless, if you wish to call us out just hit our official website at www.next3.co.uk/ and enter the forum.

Expect to find details of any recent or subsequent online games we're hosting, including information on the dates, times and games we're playing. Be sure to check it out and, hell, maybe even take part. You never know... you may just be lucky enough to kill Nick. He's pretty good, don't you know.

THE STORY SO FAR

The highs and lows of PS3 online

SO, what have we been up to so far then? By far the most popular online title is *Resistance*, its 40-player modes with gigantic maps make for some excellent games. We've been pretty hot stuff online, so our clan invites have been racking up. Come launch day, we'll be online and ready for you lot, so keep an eye out for us. Lowlights include the games that people aren't playing; both *Untold Legends* and *Tiger Woods* have very few gamers online.

peripherals

EXPANDING THE PLAYSTATION 3 HORIZON

You're not making the most of the PS3 unless you load it up with peripherals, and function the ass off it. It's with this in mind we're opening our brand new accessories section with a round-up of things you might have lying around the house.

PSP

This is probably the most useful piece of kit you can have as a PS3 owner. Not just an add-on for the console, but an awesome handheld in its own right, the PSP is capable of enhancing your PS3. Granted, the allure is more along the lines of a novelty/aesthetic appeal, but it's still very much a thing to covet. In a recent demo, Sony showed us just what the marriage of PSP and PS3 can do. At the moment, if you're within about 30 foot of your PS3 with a PSP, you can access any media you like if you've got it stored on the PS3. Obviously, watching a movie on your PSP screen isn't quite the same as bathing your eyes in the warm glow of HDMI-fuelled High Def, and any music fares poorly at high volume. However, this feature is set to expand, allowing you to access the media on your PlayStation 3 from any Wi-Fi point. It's streaming technology, so you won't be able to dump it on your memory stick and wander off to watch it outside of the WiFi point, but it's a cool feature anyway. Just when exactly this will come is beyond our reckoning, as Sony has more pressing matters to attend to at the moment.

Price: £149
Compatibility: ★★★★★
Rating: ★★★★★

CAMERA

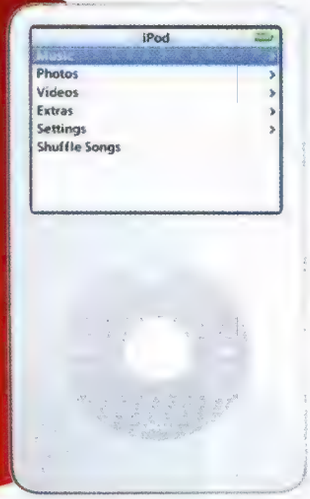
It was something of a surprise for us just how much we enjoyed poncing around with the photos. Plug any USB camera in and take the shots directly from the device, or copy them over with the same ease as the iPod.

Price: £30 upwards
Compatibility: ★★★★★
Usefulness: ★★★★★

IPOD

Pop it in the USB slot and you'll immediately have access to anything on there. What's more is the ease with which it's copied over to your hard drive, moved around or deleted. If it fits on to an iPod, you can transfer it over to the PS3 with consummate ease.

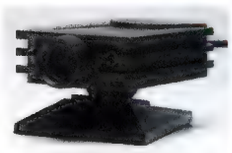
Price: £25- £260
Compatibility: ★★★★★
Usefulness: ★★★★★



HDTV

A decent TV makes a world of difference to how much enjoyment you get out of your PS3. Of course you need decent cables as well, but once it's all set up and running, you can really see the difference. With prices for the technology dropping by the day, you should be able to pick one up for next to nothing soon.

Price: £300 upwards
Compatibility: ★★★★★
Usefulness: ★★★★★



EYETOY

While the use for the original *EyeToy* is pretty minimal at the moment, it registers as a regular camera; allowing you to do everything that a normal webcam does, which is precisely nothing. However, with the technology of the *EyeToy 2* on its way, this will soon be obsolete.

Price: £10-15
Compatibility: ★★★★★
Usefulness: ★★★★★

HEADSET

In a surprisingly generous move from Sony, any ol' USB headset will work to allow you to hear all those irritating yanks while they pwn your lily white British ass. W000t11111, yeah, triple kill, triple kill, I rule. Yeah, actually, on second thoughts, maybe you're better off without one.

Price: £20
Compatibility: ★★★★★
Usefulness: ★★★★★

KEYBOARD

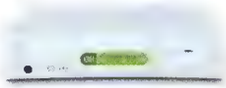
Pretty much any keyboard will work here, but your best bet is the official PS2 gaming keyboard, or indeed any gaming keyboard. Given the wireless nature of the rest of the kit, we'd have to suggest investing in a wireless keyboard, preferably an illuminated one with a Pringle-crumb and beer guard.

Price: £20- £100
Compatibility: ★★★★★
Rating: ★★★★★

MOUSE

Another handy thing you might have lying about the house, a USB mouse will make browsing the net a lot easier. To be honest though, we haven't had any problems with the Sixaxis controller for browsing, so it's not an absolutely essential purchase. We're sure there'll be additions in the future that might make a mouse a necessary part of your console gaming, but for the minute there's no real need.

Price: £10-£120
Compatibility: ★★★★★
Usefulness: ★★★★★



JOYTECH MEDIA CENTRE

Undoubtedly the coolest thing about this is the way that when you turn it upside down, the display rights itself to stop you having to crook your head to read it. On a more functional note, this clever device allows you to hook up all your AV gear and flick between them with a single remote control. While it's primarily designed for the Xbox 360, having a proprietary cable for 360 output, there's enough room for four component inputs and a whole heap of other stuff.

Price: £89.99
Compatability: ★★★★★
Rating: ★★★★★

THINGS THAT DON'T WORK:

- PS2 REMOTE
- SINGSTAR MICS
- LIGHTGUN
- DANCE MATS
- MINI PRINTERS
- PHONE BLUETOOTH
- GAMETRACK

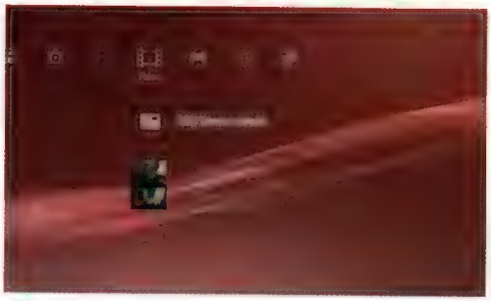
next3 how to

TEACHING YOU HOW T... T OUT YOUR PS3

WE'RE STARTING WITH BABY STEPS THIS MONTH IN OUR VERY FIRST 'HOW TO' SECTION, GIVING YOU TIPS ON HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF THE MANY FUNCTIONS AVAILABLE TO YOU. FILLING THE HARD DRIVE WITH MUSIC, SETTING UP SLIDESHOWS AND FIDDLING AROUND WITH THE PLAYSTATION SHOP HAVE BEEN OUR MAIN PASTIMES THIS MONTH. WE'LL BE GOING MORE IN-DEPTH NEXT ISSUE, BUT FOR NOW HERE'S THE SIMPLE STUFF...

howto... TAKE TUNES FROM YOUR IPOD

1 Plug in your iPod. Ensure your music is on there as MP3s from your computer's hard drive, not through iTunes.

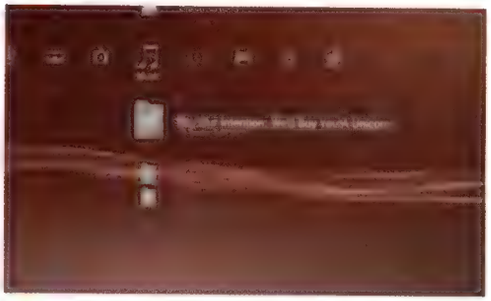


2 Select the USB Device iPod in music while pressing the △ button.

3 The next step is to select the 'display all' function that features on the screen.

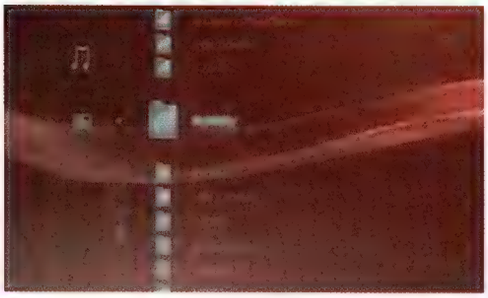
4 To choose your music, simply pick a tune or album with the △ button.

5 Select the 'copy' function and then wait for the data transfer to complete.



6 All that's left to do is for you to check out the new toons on your hard drive!

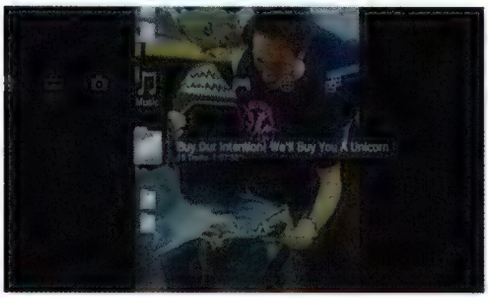
howto... SET UP A MUSICAL SLIDESHOW



1 Find a suitable piece of music. (Our favourite is the theme from *Cheers* – this works well with the portrait slideshow style. You'll find out why if you ever try it.)

2 Get some shots of your family and friends downloaded onto your hard drive.

3 Select photo album with △, choose 'slideshow' and then pick the type of slideshow you fancy. We've gone for the awesome photo album.

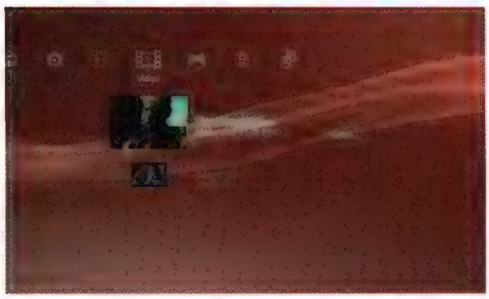


4 Press the PS button in order to bring up XMB.

5 In music, select the tune, album, or folder that you want to listen to.

6 Sit back, relax, and check out your amazing personalised screensaver.

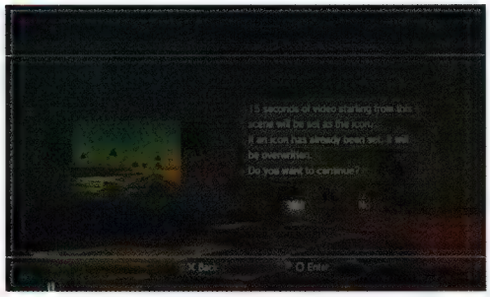
howto... CREATE YOUR OWN MOVIE ICONS



1 First of all, make sure you have a movie/trailer on your hard drive.

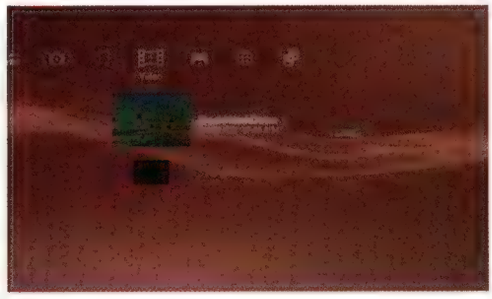
2 Play the movie and identify 15 seconds of footage that you want to have as your icon.

3 Rewind to the point in the film that you want your icon to start.



4 Press the △ button to bring up the menu and scroll through to change icon.

5 Press △ when you want your icon to start and wait for it to do its magic.



6 Go back to the XMB and admire your new handiwork.

Coming soon

next3 month

Next3 Reviews

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EXCLUSIVE REVIEW

Rainbow Six Vegas

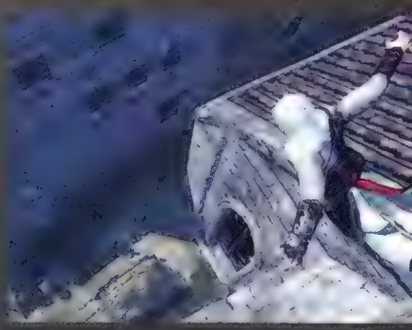
Clancy's tactical shooter tries its luck on the PS3

NEWS: We're on the shelves one week before the PS3 launches here in the UK.

The biggest games of 2007...

☐ Final Fantasy XIII

☑ Devil May Cry 4



☑ Assassin's Creed

The PS3 launch is just weeks away, so keep ourself updated with all the latest info on Sony's ew console. To make sure you don't miss a thing, why not **subscribe**? See page 60 for details...

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RIDGE RACER 7
GENJI: DAYS OF THE BLADE
MANY, MANY MORE!

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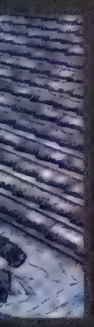

☑ Metal Gear Solid 4

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Battle for Middle Earth 2
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Blazing Angels: Sq. of WWII
Blowout Revenge
Call of Duty 3
Condemned: Crim. Origins
Dead or Alive 4
Dead Rising
Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion*
Elements of Power
Far Cry Instinct: Predator
FIFA 06: Road to World Cup
FIFA World Cup 2006
Fight Night Round 3
Full Auto
Ghost Recon Adv. War*
Godfather
Gun
Hitman: Blood Money
Kameo: Elements of Power
King Kong
Lara Croft Tomb Raider: Legend
Lego Star Wars II
LOTR: Battle for M. Earth 2
Madden NFL 2006
Medieval Combat
Mind Wanted*
NBA 2K6
NBA Live 06
Need for Speed M. Wanted
NFL 2006 (Madden)*
NHL 2K6
Obscure (Elder Scrolls IV)*
Outrun 2
Over G Fighters
Perfect Dark Zero
Peter Jackson's King Kong
PGA Tour 06
Predator: Fan Cy Instincts*
Pro Evolution Soccer 6
Project Gotham Racing 3
Quake IV
Ravenous Bastards*
Ridge Racers 6
Road to FIFA World Cup
Rumble Roses XX
Saint's Row
Scarface: The World is Yours
Sega Rally
Star Wars: Lego Sa Wars 2*
The Elder Scrolls: Oblivion
The Godfather
The Lord of the Rings: BME2
The Outfit
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 06
Tom Clancy's GR: Adv War
Tomb Raider: Legend
Tony Hawk's: Amer. Waste
X-Men: The Official Game
2006 FIFA World Cup
Plus Many More...

XBOX

Alien Echo
Black
Blade 2
Brothers in Arms: E.T.Blood
Brute Force
Conflict: Vietnam
Dead to Rights 2
Destroy All Humans
Doom III
Dynasty Warriors 4
Enter the Matrix
Fable
Far Cry: Instinct
Godfather
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Gun
Half Life 2
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Haunted Mansion
Headhunter: Redemption
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Hitman 3: Contracts
Ironed
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Kingdom U. Fire: Crusades
Kingdom Und. Fire: Heroes
LA Rush
Marc Ecko's Getting Up
Medal of Honor: Euro. Ass.
Mercenaries: Pot Destruct.
Midnight Club 3: DE Remix
Need for Speed: M. Wanted
NFL 2006
Need for Speed: Carbon
Need for Speed: Underg. 2
Path of Neo (The Matrix)
Robot Wars Ext Destruction
Scarface: World is Yours
Sims 2
Sims: Bustin' Out
Sonic Heroes
Star Wars Episode III
Star Wars: Knight: Old Rep
Star Wars: KOTOR: Sith L.
Star Wars: Lego Sa Wars 2
Suffering
The Sims 2
Tony Hawk's: Amer. Waste
WWE Wrestlemania 21
Plus Many More...

PSP

Ape Escape: On the Loose
Armoured Core: For From
ATV: Off Road Fury Blazin'
Battlefront 2 (Star Wars)
Blazin Trails
Burnout Legends
Chaos Tower
Coded Arms
Exit
Grand Tou Team Racing
Dark Resurrection (Tekken)
Darkstalkers Chronicle
Dnoid
Dead to Rights: Reckoning
Death Jr
Dragon Ball Z: Sin Budokai
Dynasty Warriors
Essential Splinter Cell:
FIFA 07
Football Manager H'held
Ghost in the Shell
Grand Th.Auto: V. City S.
Grand Theft Auto: Chin. &
Marvel Nemesis: R.O.T.I
Medieval Resurrection
Midnight Club 3: DUB Ed.
Need 4 Speed: M.W.5-1-0
NFS Underground: Rivals
Ridge Racers
Smackdown vs Raw 2006
Splinter Cell: Essential
Star Wars: Battlefront 2
Talkman
Tekken: Dark Resurrection
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 06
Tomb Raider: Legend
Twisted Metal: Head On
Vice City Stories
World Tour Soccer: Ch. Ed.
Plus Many More...

GAMECUBE

Bleinheim
Chess
Metal Gear Solid 3 Snaker
Metroid Prime 2: Echoes
Resident Evil
Resident Evil 4
Resident Evil Zero
Sims: Bustin' Out
Spider-Man: Ultimate
Starfox Adventures
Super Swing Golf Mister
Tetris Dsl Line
Zelda: The Wind Waker
Plus Many More...

PS-ONE

Alone in the Dark 4
Bomberman
Crash & Cortex: Red Alert
Dino Crisis
Duke Nukem: Time to Kill
Final Fantasy 7
Final Fantasy 8
Tomb Raider 4: Last Revel.
Yu-Gi-Oh! Forbidden M.
Plus Many More...

PLAYSTATION 2

R = D 1
Ace Combat 4: Shat. Skies
Ace Combat 5: Sq. Leader
Ace Combat: Distant Thund.
Activision Anthology
Aeon Flux
Aero Elite: Comb. Academy
Agassi Tennis Generation
Age of Empires 2
Agent Under Fire
Aggressive Inline
Airblade
Alex Ferguson Pl. Man. 07
Alex Ferguson P. Manager
Alias
Alien: Hominid
Aliens vs Predator: Extinct.
All Star Baseball 2007
All-Star Pro Wrestling 2
Alone in the Dark 4
Alter Echo
Americas 10 Most Wanted
Americas Pro Trucker
Amplitude
Angel of Darkness
Ape Escape 2
Ape Escape 3
Ape Escape: Pumped & Pr
Arthur and the Twilight of Sp
Area 51
Armageddon: MDK2
Armoured Core 2
Armoured Core 3
Army Men RTS
Army Men: Air Attack 2
Army Men: Sarges War
Athens 2004
Atlantis 3: New World
ATV: Off Road Fury 3
ATV: Off Road Fury 4
ATV: Quad Racing 2
Auto Modellista
B = D 3
Backyard Basketball
Backyard Wrestling
Backyard Wrestling 2
Bad Boys 2
Baldur's Gate: D.Alliance 2
Baldur's Gate: Dark.Alliance
Band Of Thieves
Base Strike
Batman Begins
Batman: Vengeance
Batman: Rise of Sin Tzu
Battle Engine Aquila
Battlefield 2: Mod. Combat
Battlefield: Galactica
Beatdown: F. of Vengeance
Beyond Good and Evil
Big Mutha Truckers
Big Mutha Truckers 2
BIG: NBA Street
BIG: SSX Snowboarding
BIG: SSX Tricky
Bionicle
Black
Black and Bruised
Black Monday: Getaway 2
Blade 2
Blood Rayne
Blood Rayne 2
Bloody Roar 4
BlowOut
BMX XXX
Bond 007: Agent Und. Fire
Bond 007: Everything or Nothing
Bond 007: Nightfire
Bouncer
Bounty Hunter, Star Wars
Brats: Rock Angelz
Brian Lara Intl Cricket 05
Britney's Dance Beat
Broken Sword 3: S. Dragon
Brothers in Arms
Brothers in Arms: E.T. Blood
Buffy: Chaos Bleeds
Bujingai: The Forsaken City
Bulletproof '50 Cent'
Bully
Burnout Revenge
C = D 3
Call of Duty 2 & 1 Red One
Call of Duty: Finest Hour
Camp Canem Edit
Celebrity Deathmatch
Chaos Legion
Clock Tower 3
Colin McRae Rally 3
Colin McRae Rally 4
Colosseum: Rd. to Freedom
Conflict: Desert Storm
Conflict: Desert Storm 2
Conflict: Global Storm
Conflict: Vietnam
Corvette
Crash Tag Team Racing
Crash Twinsanity
Cy Girls
D = D 4
Da Vinci Code
Dark Cloud 2
Darkwatch
Dead or Alive 2
Delta Force: B. Hawk Down
Destroy All Humans
Devil May Cry
Devil May Cry 2
Devil May Cry 3
Digimon World 4
Dog's Life
Dragon Ball Z: Budokai
Dragon Ball Z: Budokai 2
Dragon Ball Z: Budokai 3
Dragon Ball Z: Budokai T.
Dragon Ball Z: Sagas
Dragon Quest VIII: JOTCK
Drakengard 2
DRIV3R
Driver: Parallel Lines
Dynasty Warriors 3
Dynasty Warriors 4
Dynasty Warriors 4: Hy.Legs
E = D 5
Empire: Total War
Enter the Matrix
Evil Dead: Fist of Boomstick
F = D 6
Fantavision
Fantastic 4
FIFA 07
FIFA 2006
FIFA 2006
FIFA Football 2003
FIFA Street 2
FIFA Street Soccer
FIFA World Cup 2006
Fifth Comm: Bulletproof
Fight Night Round 2
Fight Night Round 3
Final Fantasy X
Final Fantasy X-2
Final Fight: Streetwise
FlatOut
Forbidden Siren
Freedom Metal 3
Full Spectrum Warrior
Futurama
G = D 7
Galactic Wrestling
Gallerians: Ash
Genji: Dawn of Samurai
Getaway
Getaway 2: Black Monday
Ghost Hunter
Ghost Recon 2
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Gran Turismo 4
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Gretta Hero
Guilty Gear 2000
Gun
H = D 8
H.Potter & Pris. of Azkaban
H.Potter: Quidditch W. Cup
Harry Potter: Goblet of Fire
Haunting Ground
Haven: Call of the King
He Man: Def. of Grayskull
Headhunter: Redemption
Hitman 2: Silent Assassin
Hitman 3: Contracts
I = D 9
Hulk: Ult. Destruction
Italian Job, L.A. Heist
J = I 0
Jade Cocoon 2
Jak 2: Renegade
Jak 3
Jak X: Combat Racing
James Bond 007: Nightfire
James Bond: E. or Nothing
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K = I 1
Karaoke Stage
Kill.switch
Killzone
King Kong (Peter Jackson's)
King of Route 66
Kingdom Hearts
Knight Rider
L = I 2
L.A. Rush
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Leisure Suit Larry: M.C.L.
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Lord of the Rings: 3rd Age
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M = I 3
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Mafia
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Marc Ecko's Getting Up
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Marvel Nemesis: R.O.T.I.
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Metal Gear Solid 3: S. Eater
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Midnight Club 3: DE Remix
Midnight Club 3: DUB Ed.
Monkey Island: Esc. from
Mortal Kombat: Deadly Al.
Mortal Kombat: Deception
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MTX Motorrax
MX 2002
N = I 4
Name Breaker
Naval Ops: Warship Gunner
NBA 2K6
NBA Ballers
NBA Street 3
Need for Speed M. Wanted
Need for Speed: Carbon
Need for Speed: H. Pursuit
Need for Speed: Underg.
Need for Speed: Underg.2
NFL Street 2
NHL 2004
Nightfire
O = I 5
Obscure
OneEightSeven: Ride or Die
Onimusha
Onimusha 2: Demons Siege
Onimusha: Warlords
007 Agent Under Fire
007 Everything or Nothing
OutRun 2006: C. 2 Coast
P = I 6
Path of Neo: The Matrix
Pinball Hall of Fame: T.G.C.
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Playboy: The Mansion
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Premier Manager 2002
Premier Manager 2003
Pride Fighting Champion.
Primal
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Prince of Persia: W.Within
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Prisoner of War
Pro Evolution Socce
Pro Evolution Socce 4
Pro Evolution Socce 5
Project Eden
Project Snowblind
Project Zero
Project Zero 2
Psi Ops: Mindgate Consp.
Psychonauts
R = I 8
Ratchet & Clank 2
Ratchet & Clank 3
Ravens Smackdown: WWE
Rave vs Smackdown 2006
Rayman M
Red Faction
Res. Evil: Code Veronica X
Res. Evil: Outbreak File #2
Resident Evil 4
Resident Evil: Outbreak
Riseto Honor
Robot Wars
Rocky
RTX Red Rock
Run Like Hell
S = I 9
San Andreas: GTA
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Second Sight
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Serious Sam: N. Encounter
Shadow Hearts
Shadow of Rome
Shadow of the Colossus
Shadowman 2
Shellshock Nam '67
Silent Hill 2
Silent Hill 3
Silent Hill 4: The Room
Simpsons: Hit & Run
Simpsons: Road Rage
Sims
Sims 2
Sims in the City
Smackdown vs Raw
Smackdown vs Raw 2006
Smackdown vs. R.C.T Pain
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Sonic Heroes
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Sphinx & Cursed Mummy
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Spider-Man: The Movie 2
Spider-Man: Ultimate
Splinter Cell
Splinter Cell 2: Pandora T.
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SSX On Tour
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Suffering
Suffering: Ties That Bind
Summoner
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Tiger Woods PGA Tour 06
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Tom Clancy's GR: Adv War
Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six 3
Tomb Raider: Angel of Drk
Tomb Raider: Legend
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U = 2 1
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Z = 2 6
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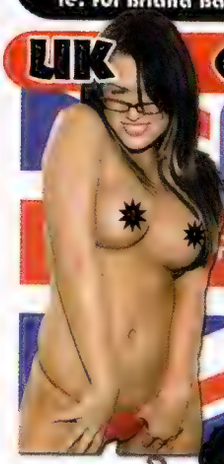

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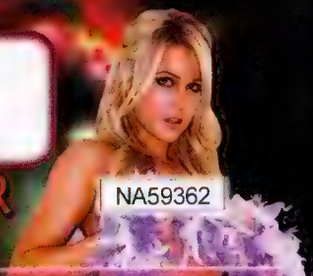
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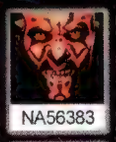
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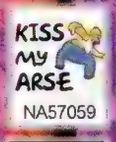

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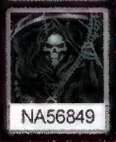
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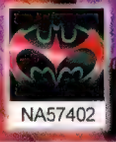
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NA43152	Like a mans an*s
NA43153	Smell like sh*t
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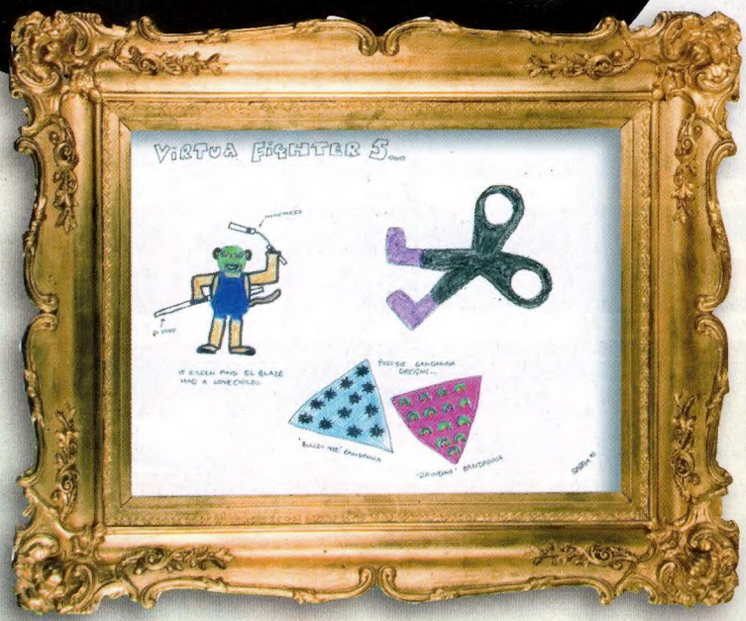
Art inspired by the month's cover game.
This month: Virtua Fighter 5



▼ **"Untitled"**, Tompey *(2007)*

"With an austere, classical bent, I've taken my lead from the likes of Rodin with a diorama that transcends the ages. In capturing El Blaze and Kage locked in combat. I've tried – and succeeded, I feel – in bringing to light what *VF5* is all about: next gen meets retro, meets Sega, meets mashed potato."

Art critic says: Tompey has ingeniously problematised the subject by creating his coital/gladitorial figures out of a child's plaything, Playdoh. I notice that there are no genitals depicted – possibly questioning the impotency of cyber sex/violence?

▲ **"Virtua Fighter 5"**, Sarah Slee *(2007)*

"I wanted to draw attention to passion, symbolism and style. To depict 'passion' I have answered a 'what if?' question. For 'style' I designed bandannas for war and peace. Then I created movement on paper – the scissor kick – through the art of symbolism."

Sarah shows promise not only in portraiture, but also in textiles. Her piece clearly discusses notions of sexuality and violence and the nature and relationship between the two in the human psyche; her resulting virtual übermensch echoes the work of Francis Bacon.

▲ **"Akira is not Ryu"**, Nick Jones *(2007)*

"The idea was to discuss notions of identity and if a fictional character can have one. Akira is often mistaken for *Street Fighter*'s Ryu and I figured that this would/could have some pretty embarrassing connotations, especially when about identity."

Jones has really got to the root of the matter here, juxtaposing a large, 3D Akira with an intentionally insignificant (and 2D) Ryu – clearly a comment on the importance of self in a world where solitude is nigh-on impossible. A work of growing maturity.

▲ **"Virtua Fighter"**, Craig Gilmore *(2007)*

"Having studied interpretive dance for two years I tend to apply that to most things now. Hence my interpretation of the term 'Virtua Fighter' – a man beating up a virtual machine."

Pure social(ist) commentary from Craig – the fighter destroying the arcade cabinet is clearly a statement about the destruction of penny arcades, childhood and the rape of the British seaside holiday, and therefore an indictment of the class system. The work of a keen social-political mind.

▲ **"Mash 't up"**, James Davies *(2007)*

"I wanted to capture the experience of playing *Virtua Fighter* through a non-interactive medium. Think of it as a transitive experience: the viewer becomes part of the gaming experience without picking up a controller."

James is clearly a do-er and this tour de force of a drawing reminds me of a young Jackson Pollock. Whereas Pollock's work abstracted the action into his famous 'action paintings', James concentrates on the metaphorical approach while retaining a similar visceral energy. Never before have I seen the subject tackled with such gusto.

▲ **"Honour"**, Keith Hennessey *(2007)*

"To the Japanese people honour is everything just as *Virtua Fighter* is to fighting fans, well that's not entirely true but it's pretty important. In my piece I wanted to convey a sense of tradition, of ancient mysticism, but mostly to see what Akria would look like with a big Playdoh head."

A daring exploration of 2D/3D themes, using media that most artists would never dream of using together – pencil and Playdoh. Clever. The appreciation of colour is fantastical; his palette is Miró-like, while its application is as experimental as Kandinsky. Sublime.

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